

BECOME A BLESSING

A Book of Intentions

Magidah Khulda bat Sarah
Rabbi Moshe ben Asher

All etchings by Saul Raskin (1886-1966). Raskin was born in Russia, trained as an artist in Europe, and came to the U.S. in 1904. These etchings were originally published in The Book of Psalms (New York: Saul Raskin, 1942) and Pirke Aboth (New York: Saul Raskin, 1940).



Khevera shel Kharakim
<http://www.gatherthepeople.org>
kharakim@jps.net

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Notes on Usage	3
Shirim	4
L'sheim Yikhud	4
Ma Tov	5
Eilu D'varim	8
Elohai N'shama	10
Ashreinu	11
Higid L'kha	12
Eilekha Adonai Ekra	13
Barukh She'amar	15
Torat Adonai T'mima	16
Mi Ha'ish	18
Hodu Ladonai	19
Tov L'hodot	23
Tzadik Katamar	24
Hal'lu Eil B'kodsho	25
Az Yashir	27
Nishmat Kol Khai	30
Or Khadash	31
Emet V'yatsiv	32
Adonai S'fatai Tiftakh	33
Yismakh Moshe	35
V'shamru	36
Am M'kad'shei	38
Eloheinu Veilohei Avoteinu	39
Y'varekh'kha Adonai	40
Sim Shalom	41
Oseh Shalom	43
Barukh Haba	44
Mi Shebeirakh (l'kholim)	46
Y'hi Ratzon (l'shalom)	47
Ashrei	48
Eitz Khayim Hi	52
K'vodo Malei Olam	53
Ein Keiloheinu	54
Adon Olam	56
Hinei Eil Y'shuati (Havdalah Blessings)	58
Our Shabbos Now Has Ended	60

INTRODUCTION

WHY PRAY?

This is the cynic's question, but sometimes it's ours too. Most of us can acknowledge that in times of trouble we find hope and solace by praying with a congregation, and that such prayer may even allow us to reach the deepest parts of ourselves, to feel deeply our connection to God.

And yet . . . such moments, for most of us, are few and far between.

What about the rest of the time? What about those times when the cynic in us asks: "Why are you praying? Don't you have anything better to do?"

That would be our point exactly! That's why we're praying. We're trying to find something better to do—with our lives! And we're relying on the prayer to show us the way.

For if we don't also commit to transform ourselves and the world in the image of God, then what is our prayer?

To paraphrase Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch's equation, prayer minus the intention to do better in life equals lip service. Or as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehood." And of course, prayer that's not connected to doing better in life often *feels* empty—it feels like lip service. It can leave us wondering: "Why isn't this working? I don't feel blessed. What am I doing here?"

According to Rabbi Hirsch, "The People of Abraham are, in private and public life, to follow one calling: *להיה ברכה* to become a blessing. To dedicate themselves with all devotion to the Divine purpose of bringing happiness to the world and mankind. . . ." (Genesis 12:2)

Is that possible? Do we dare to believe such a thing—that we can make God present in the world, nurturing and sustaining all life, by sanctifying our own day-to-day action?

Not without preparation, we can't; not without time, even if it is only momentary, to reflect on what we've done and what we will do; not without time to recharge our spirits to go back out into the world.

We understand the purpose of prayer to be not an end in itself, but rather a preparation for life. Prayer can be the time when we choose to renew our intention to become a blessing and save our lives from meaninglessness.

How are we to instill this admittedly extraordinary, even grandiose meaning and purpose into our prayer?

We begin by questioning: What is this prayer asking us to do? How is it prompting us to act in the image of God such that we may become a blessing?

We explore these questions in this *sefer kavanot* (book of intentions) in two ways:

- With the drashot, the interpretations, we dive into the prayer, as if it were a pool. Our sages have used the word "siakh" (literally, plant growth) for prayer, comparing human spiritual growth to the growth of a plant. Prayer from this point of view, according to Rabbi Hirsch, is "simply drinking from the source of all spiritual life, accordingly, watering all the fibres and filaments of our inner being to produce new blossoms." Through the drashot, we wanted to immerse ourselves in the prayer at length, to sound its depths, and to emerge "saturated" and prepared to flourish—that is, with a better understanding of the creation and what would be required of us to be in harmony with it, to become a blessing.
- Of course, at some point we have to climb out of the pool and go back to the real world. We have to stop soaking and start blooming! In the *iyun tefillot*, the poetic meditations, we explore how the prayer might inspire us to action in the image of God, first unseen within ourselves and then conspicuously out in the world of others. We understand the prayer as intending to send us back into the world to do a mitzvah, so that we can become a blessing.

It is said that when we humans do a mitzvah, we unite the two halves of the name of God—recreating and unifying justice and love in the world by acting in the image of God—filling our prayer and our life with *כוונה* (focused intention) and finally achieving *נחת רוח* (satisfaction of the spirit).

May we all find satisfaction of spirit by becoming a blessing!

NOTES ON USAGE

This book is meant to be used with our CD or cassette album, *Become A Blessing*, which is why we have included transliterations and special typography, as explained below. In both the album and book, we have focused on those parts of the liturgy that are commonly sung by the congregation. Each section of the book is organized in the following order: Hebrew tefilla, transliteration, translation, d'rash, and iyun tefilla. Footnotes are included at the end of each section.

Personal Pronouns

Both Torah and Siddur in many instances use personal pronouns, particularly the male “He,” when referring to God—as if God is a *male person*. Similarly, the tradition makes wide use of anthropomorphic representations of God, such as God’s hand or nose or anger.

The rabbis have unequivocally taught that the pronouns and anthropomorphisms are not to be taken literally. That is, although God’s qualities may usefully be described with such language, it is employed only to facilitate understanding of the Ein Sof.*

In this book we have respected the mitzvah neither to add nor take away from the Hebrew Scriptures or, in the same spirit, from traditional siddur Hebrew. We have, however, used interpretive translations of pronouns to be more inclusive, relying on terms that are neuter gender.

*Transliteration Pronunciation Guide***

Pronunciation follows Sephardic conventions. All consonants are pronounced as they normally would be in American English, with the exception of the *kh* combination, which does not have an English counterpart. It is pronounced as a hard “h” sound. An apostrophe following a consonant is equivalent to a short “ih” sound (e.g., l' = “lih”). Vowel sounds are pronounced as follows:

a = ah, like f <u>a</u> ther	e = eh, like b <u>e</u> t	ei = ay, like d <u>a</u> y	ai = aye, like l <u>i</u> e
i = ee, like s <u>ee</u>	o = oh, like v <u>o</u> te	u = oo, like f <u>oo</u> d	

Key to Special Typography

Brackets [] are used to show material that has been included to accommodate our musical arrangements; they denote text excerpted or added, and which does not correspond to the traditional siddur. Parentheses () are used to indicate that the original text is not sung. Arrows < > are used in transliterations and translations to indicate material that is sung two or more times.

Translations

While we appreciate poetic and interpretive translations, virtually all of the translations are literal as an aid to learning Hebrew. On occasion, however, we have taken the liberty of also offering an interpretive translation, which is marked with an asterisk and noted at the end of the section.

* Kabbalistic mystical reference to the pure essence of God, that which is beyond any revealed characteristic and which remains beyond all forms of human perception and cognition.

** With thanks to Jeremy Lipton.

SHIRIM



L'sheim,
l'sheim y i-khud,
l'sheim y i-khud ku-d'sha.
<Ku-d'sha, ku-d'sha, ku-d'sha,
l'sheim y i-khud ku-d'sha.>

For the sake of the unification of the Holy One
[I am ready to fulfill the Torah's commandments].

D'rash

For the sake of the unification of the Holy One—יְחִיד (yikhud) refers to unification of Hakadosh (the Holy One) and the Shekhina (the Dwelling One), the male and female aspects of God, which are said to reflect the external male sexuality, apropos to God's presence when revealed outside of ourselves (as at the Sea of Reeds), and the internal female sexuality, apropos to the Shekhina's presence within us (as when we show kindness to another). We "exile the Shekhina" by alienating ourselves from the presence of God within us, and we hasten that alienation by blinding ourselves to the holiness of our physical world, no longer seeing its divine minding by God. When the Shekhina is alive within us, our physical world reflects the Divine Presence. We unify Hakadosh and Shekhina by our action, when the soul of every other person becomes the preoccupation of the spirit within each of us. Tzedek is one visible manifestation of the Shekhina's presence. When we act as a kahal poalei tzedek (a congregational community of doers of righteousness and justice) to alter our physical world, we unify God through the mitzvah to love your fellow like yourself because, as Hillel said, the rest is only commentary to guide us in the realization of that love in God's creation.

* Excerpted from the traditional weekday siddur (prayerbook), to focus intention before doing mitzvot, but often not included in contemporary siddurim.

Iyun Tefilla

THE MITZVAH DIMENSION

Did you think it was going to be easy
Living in the fourth dimension,
Mastering another reality
While others live only
With length and breadth
And height?
You have to be patient.
You have to watch
For the moment
To bloom
Right at your doorstep.
Now! There! See!
The window opens
Onto the secret garden.
You turn.
You catch a shimmer
In the tree.
Opportunity
Has landed like a bird
Of rare plumage
In your garden.
What are you waiting for?
Seize the moment!
Become the bird!
Rise on healing wings
And give
The broken world
One soul!

מָה טוֹב אֵהְלִיךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאֲנִי בְּרַב חֲסִדֶּךָ אָבוֹא בֵּיתְךָ, אֲשַׁתְּחֹוּהָ
אֶל הַיֵּכָל קֹדֶשׁךָ בִּירְאָתְךָ. יְיָ אֶהְבֵּתִי מֵעוֹן בֵּיתְךָ, וּמִקּוֹם מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדְךָ. וְאֲנִי
אֲשַׁתְּחֹוהָ וְאֶכְרַעָהּ, אֶבְרַכָּהּ לִפְנֵי יְיָ עֲשֵׂי. וְאֲנִי, תַּפְלִתִּי לָךְ יְיָ, עֵת רְצוֹן, אֱלֹהִים
בְּרַב חֲסִדֶּךָ, עֲנֵנִי בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ [אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב חֲסִדֶּךָ, עֲנֵנִי בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ].

Ma to-vu o-ha-le-kha ya-a-kov mish-k'no-te-kha yis-ra-el. Va-ani b'rov khas-
d'kha a-vo vei-te-kha esh-ta-kha-veh el hei-khal kod-sh'kha b'yir-a-te-kha
a-do-nai a-hav-ti m'on bei-te-kha u-m'kom mish-kan k'vo-de-kha va-a'ni esh-ta-
kha-veh v'ekh-ra'ah ev-ra-kha lif-nei a-do-nai o-si va-a'ni t'fi-la-ti l'kha a-do-
nai eit ra-tzon e-lo-him b'rov khas-de-kha a-nei-ni b'e-met yish-e-kha.

How good are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel. As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your house; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You. Adonai, I love the sanctuary of Your house, and the place where Your glory resides. I shall prostrate myself and bow, I shall bend the knee before Adonai, my Maker. As for me, may my prayer to You, Adonai, be at an opportune time; God, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation.



D'rash

How good are your tents—Tent symbolizes the committed relationship that is the foundation of family life. To be outside the tent is to be away from one's mate—physically, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. Our families approach the perfection of unity and harmony when we love our partners as ourselves, and when we personally assume the burden of our children's moral and ethical education in the face of ubiquitous corruption. **Jacob**—Because of its commitment to the moral purity of the family, which is the underpinning of community and nationhood, Israel was destined to survive and succeed. **Your dwellings, Israel**—This is confirmed in the description of Israel's tents not as beautiful but "good." **As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your house**—Your gift of free will has given me the choice to make my home a sanctuary, a place of prayer and study dedicated to Kiddush Hashem (the Sanctification of Your Name). **I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You**—In reverence and wonder at the canvas You have created, I will use in Your service all of the energy and spirit I can muster, reaching within and without, going beyond what is familiar and comfortable, to help shape Your creation as a work of art. **Adonai, I love the sanctuary of Your house, and the place where Your glory resides**—There is no greater joy than to be in the presence of Your righteousness, Your truth, Your justice, Your freedom, Your peace, and Your kindness. **I shall prostrate myself and bow, I shall bend the knee before Adonai my Maker**—I shall use up my life's time and energy to dwell where Your glory resides. I shall transform my own selfish appetites and desires l'sheim yikhud (for the sake of the unification). **As for me, may my prayer to You, Adonai, be at an opportune time; God, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation**—May it be Your will that I have not delayed too long in choosing life over death, in committing myself to jettison that which is deathly and dead within me for that which is alive and life-giving, so that I may—through the compassionate healing power of Your creation—be redeemed and saved.

Iyun Tefilla

MEETING PLACE

Climb to the top
Of a hill.

And like Balaam,
Look down,
At Israel's camps.
Open your mouth.
Allow the blessing
To fall from your lips.
Mah tovu ohalekha, Yaakov!
How good are your tents, Jacob!
Then look there,
On the east
And if your tribe is
Judah, Yisakhar or Zevulun,
You have found
Your place.
Your tent is there.
And if you are
Reuvein, Shimon or Gad,
Then you are on the south.
And if
Ephraim, M'nashe or Binyamin,
Then you and yours
Are on the west,
Or on the north,
If you are
Dan, Asher or Naphtali.
And if you are a Levite,
Then you are
In their midst.
And in your midst
A tent and an ark,
A place to meet with God.
And yet,
A meeting place is not
What makes for being good
Or getting near.
So do not cry:
Heikhal Hashem
The Temple of God,
The Temple of God!
As if it were a place
To hide.
But rather Jeremiah-like
Declare:
Let me
Become the place
Your Name
Shall touch
The earth!
Let me become
Your dwelling place!
Your tent!

אלו דברים שאין להם שעור [שאינן להם שעור]: הפאה והבכורים והראיון
 וגמילות חסדים ותלמוד תורה:
 אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהם בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא,
 ואלו הן [ואלו הן]: כבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים, והשכמת בית המדרש
 שחרית וערבית, והכנסת אורחים, ובקור חולים, והכנסת כלה, ולוית המת, ועיון
 תפלה, והבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו ובין איש לאשתו, ותלמוד תורה כנגד
 כלם [ותלמוד תורה כנגד כלם].*

Ei-lu d'va-rim <sh'ein la-hem shi-ur>. Ha-pei-a v'ha-bi-ku-rim v'ha-rei-a-yon
 u-ge-mi-lut kha-sa-dim v'tal-mud to-ra.
 Ei-lu d'va-rim she-a-dam o-kheil pei-ro-tei-hem ba-o-lam ha-zeh v'ha-ke-ren
 ka-ye-met lo la-o-lam ha-ba, <v'ei-lu hein>: ki-bud av va-eim, u-g'mi-lut kha-sa-
 dim, v'hash-ka-mat beit ha-mid-rash sha-kha'rit v'ar-vit v'khakh-na-sat or-khim
 u-vi-kur kho-lim, v'hakh-na-sat ka-la, u-l'va-yat ha-meit, v'i-yun t'fi-la v'ha-va-
 at sha-lom bein a-dam la-kha'vei-ro u-vein ish l'ish-to, <v'tal-mud to-rah k'ne-
 ged ku-lam>.

These are the things that do not have a prescribed measure: the corner (of the field, left for the poor), the first fruit offering, the pilgrimage, acts of lovingkindness, and study of Torah.

These are the things the fruit of which a person consumes in this world but whose principal endures in the world to come—they are: honoring mother and father, acts of lovingkindness, early (attendance) at the house of study, morning and night, welcoming guests, visiting the sick, bringing the bride (under the wedding canopy), accompanying the dead, devotion in prayer, and bringing peace between one person and another, and between husband and wife—and the study of Torah is equivalent to all of them.

D'rash

These are the things that do not have a prescribed measure—Because the upper standard for action was not established by the Torah, it was effectively left to each individual's discretion, although the principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin* (going beyond the letter of the law) should sensitize us against doing only the minimum required by our own conscience. **The corner (of the field, left for the poor)**—So that a minimum fraction (1/60th) of the produce of our labor should always accrue directly to those who are impoverished and malnourished. **The first fruit offering**—So that the civic duty of every citizen is to support adequately those who provide to the people the essentials of spiritual and moral guidance and education. **The pilgrimage**—Three times a year we are to respond not only to our narrow provincial interests but also to those of *klal Yisrael*, all the people, gathering together in *tefilla* (prayer), *teshuva* (repentance), *thanksgiving*, and *celebration*. **Acts of lovingkindness**—Unlike *tzedakah* (giving what justice requires), which is limited to 20 percent of one's income or wealth, lovingkindness has no limit and may be shown even to the dead. **And the study of Torah**—To guide our actions each day of our life, we are to study Torah each day, equally for its immediate illumination of the path and to remind us constantly of its singular light.

These are the things the fruit of which a person consumes in this world but whose principal endures in the world to come—We “consume” them because we too are the beneficiaries of our *mitzvot*, as it is said, “the reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah*,” not only in the present moment but in the accumulation of goodness that redounds to the future of this world, and which, when linked to our spirit,

*uplifts others remaining here when we have passed on to the next world. **Honoring mother and father**—Seeking to find not their foibles and failures but worthy character and conviction, which we honor not with lip service but heartfelt performance of mitzvot in which they may take pride. **Acts of lovingkindness**—Motivating ourselves to take greater pleasure from giving than receiving by affording the benefit of the doubt to all others, especially those in need, whether for spiritual, emotional, or material support. **Early (attendance) at the house of study, morning and night**—That regardless of what else occupies us, we begin each day with learning and teaching, acquiring for ourselves and sharing with others, knowledge of how to live in the image of God. **Welcoming guests**—Never losing sight of our own personal and national experience as strangers, the fear and pain and struggle, and showing to others empathy commensurate with the challenges they face. **Visiting the sick**—Recognizing that, given the importance of spiritual well-being to physical and emotional recovery, our show of care and kindness may dramatically improve or even save a life. **Bringing the bride (under the wedding canopy)**—Traditionally the mitzvah of providing a dowry to the impoverished, but in our time encompassing any form of nurture or support that enables a less fortunate young woman (or man) to make a successful Jewish marriage and home—to be performed with humility in private so as not to cause embarrassment or shame. **Accompanying the dead**—Referred to as *khesed shel emet* (true lovingkindness), because the honor we show to the deceased by accompanying them to the grave and assisting in its closure (in place of paid cemetery employees), exacts a high emotional price and can't be repaid. **Devotion in prayer**—That our prayer has authentic *kavvanah* (focused intention) because it leads and follows our mitzvot (biblically commanded good deeds) and *tikun olam* (repair of the world). **Bringing peace between one person and another, and between husband and wife**—Not simply contributing to the absence of strife and violence but teaching negotiation and mediation skills to enable constructive resolution of inevitable conflict, which is the necessary condition preceding all personal and social harmony and fulfillment. **And the study of Torah is equivalent to them all**—Because instinct, intuition, and commonsense are not reliable guides to find our way through the moral and ethical maze of social, political, and economic life.*

Iyun Tefilla

KINDNESS IS FOREVER

How few
 Are the things
 About which I can say:
 This is truly
 Without measure!
 Do I dare
 To count my love
 Among them?
 I try to see my soul
 Stretching like
 That night garden,
 The starry sky,
 Or like that boundless
 Path of broken stars,
 The beach.
 But time always
 Has its way,
 Its end of the season,
 And place has
 Its end of the line.
 So how am I

To think of kindness
 Without end?
 Let me try to remember
 How many
 Are the kindnesses,
 Ki l'olam khasdo,
 On which
 My life has depended.
 Let me try to remember
 In whose image,
 I am created.
 Ki l'olam khasdo.

* From the Mishnah, Peah 1:1, and the Gemara, Shabbat 127a.

אֱלֹהִי, נִשְׁמָה שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא [אֱלֹהִי, נִשְׁמָה שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא]. אַתָּה
 בְּרֵאתָהּ, אַתָּה יִצְרָתָהּ, אַתָּה נִפְחָתָהּ בִּי, וְאַתָּה מְשַׁמְרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי. [אֱלֹהִי, נִשְׁמָה
 שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא].

<E-lo-hai n'sha-ma she-na-ta-ta bi t'ho-ra hi.> A-ta v'ra-ta a-ta y'tzar-ta, a-ta
 n'fakh-ta bi, v'a-ta m'sham-ra b'kir-bi. E-lo-hai n'sha-ma she-na-ta-ta bi t'ho-ra
 hi.

My God, the soul You placed in me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me, You keep it in me.

D'rash

My God, the soul You placed in me is pure—*The part within me that is created uniquely in Your image, both separating and joining me with all the rest of Your creation, is “capable of all that is good and pure, holy and divine” (S.R. Hirsch)—not limited in any way. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me, You keep it in me—That I am capable of goodness and holiness is not my virtue but Your continuing gift.*

Iyun Tefilla

DON'T PUT OUT THE LIGHT

For You
 Who made the light
 And blew it into me,
 Who gave me
 My soul
 To be a lantern
 In Your hand,
 Saying,
 Don't put out the light!
 Let me keep pure

This filament,
My body.
Let it be
According
To Your will,
A sheath for light,
That I may lift
My lamp
Into Your hands.

אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ, מַה טוֹב חֶלְקֵנוּ, וּמַה נְעִים [מַה נְעִים] גּוֹרְלֵנוּ, וּמַה יָּפָה יְרֻשָּׁתֵנוּ. אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ,
נִשְׂאֲנָחֵנוּ מִשְׂכִּימִים וּמַעֲרִיבִים, עֶרֶב וּבֹקֶר, וְאוֹמְרִים פְּעָמִים בְּכָל יוֹם: שְׁמַע
יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד:

Ash-rei-nu ma tov khel-kei-nu, u-<ma na-im> go-ra-lei-nu, u-ma ya-fa y'ru-sha-tei-nu. Ash-rei-nu, she-a-nakh-nu mash-ki-mim u-ma-a-ri-vim e-rev va-vo-ker, v'om-rim pa-a-ma-yim b'khol yom: sh'ma yis-ra-el, a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu, a-do-nai e-khad.

We are happy. How good is our portion and how pleasant our lot, and how beautiful our heritage. We are happy that we rise early and stay late (in the house of study), morning and evening, and we proclaim twice each day: Listen Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

D'rash

We are happy. How good is our portion and how pleasant our lot, and how beautiful our heritage—Our inheritance has taught us that our purpose in life is to make a difference, to leave more than we found, to make the world a better place for those who come after us. Our history has taught us that, despite the pain, it is better to be among the persecuted than the persecutors. We are happy that we rise early and stay late (in the house of study), morning and evening—We are fulfilled learning and teaching, not satisfied with answers unless they beget questions, never tiring of Torah and the prospect of turning it over and over to discover new lessons. And we proclaim twice each day: Listen Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One—With our eyes covered to avoid distractions, we proclaim, not only for ourselves but for all who may listen and learn, especially Jews, not only what we believe but what we can be and do. That one Divine Intelligence is minding the creation, and that its governance can be known even while its Creator remains hidden in its infrastructure, confirms that although we are little more than dust, we are given the power to remake the world in God's image. This, then, is the One God that offers hope; the One God to which we are devoted above the “gods” of position, possessions, prestige, and power; the One God Who has given us the Torah blueprint for creation that enables us to find our way.

Iyun Tefilla

WITNESS FOR HEAVEN*

To be a witness
For heaven you have to
Reach
For the last letter

Of sh'ma
 And the last letter
 Of ekhad
 And hold on
 To all that is
 between.
 It's a stretch,
 I know,
 But you can do it.
 To be a witness,
 You have to teach
 What you hold.
 For to hold what
 You learn
 And not to teach
 Is to wear knowledge
 Like a jewel
 In a headdress,
 Good only
 For parades
 Of the self.
 To be a witness
 Is to hold on
 To the future.

* The last letter of sh'ma (ayin) and the last letter of ekhad (dalet) together form the word עד (witness). "Everybody who utters it [the Sh'ma] stands as a witness of God to himself and to the world." (S.R. Hirsch)

הַגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם מַה-טוֹב
 וּמָה יְהוָה דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ
 כִּי אִם-עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד
 וְהִצָּנֵעַ לִכְתּוֹת עִם-אֱלֹהֶיךָ*:

Hi-gid l'kha a-dam ma-tov,
 u-ma a-do-nai do-reish mim-kha:
 ki im a-sot mish-pat v'a-ha-vat khe-sed
 v'hatz-nei-a le-khet im-e-lo-he-kha.

One has told you, human, what is good,
 what Adonai requires of you:
 only to do justice and love kindness,
 and to go modestly with your God.

D'rash

One has told you, human, what is good—*The Creator, Who determines the workings of the world, has made right and wrong clear to us; not what is good in principle or in the abstract, but what is good for us to do. What Adonai requires of you*—*We regard the mitzvot as obligatory not because we must observe*

them, but because only through them can we be fulfilled. Only to do justice and love kindness, and to go modestly with your God—Kindness is the hallmark of relationships that conquer existential loneliness and, through which, we find meaning and fulfillment. Kindness is made possible by justice and modesty, that is, humility. There is no kindness in a relationship in which either person is an “it,” an object for the other’s gratification rather than a “thou,” another sentient human being—which fundamentally is an issue of justice. And there is no kindness in a relationship in which either person is closed to learning from the other—which fundamentally is an issue of humility. More than anything, goodness relies on kindness, and nothing makes it more possible than justice and humility.

Iyun Tefilla

MERCY DOES NOT FALL LIKE GENTLE RAIN

In fact
It doesn't fall
At all
Out of the sky,
But is delivered
By the hands
Of justice,
Our hands.
We are the hands
Of both.
To think otherwise
Is to act as if
We could ignore
The child about to step
Into heavy traffic
For the sake of
Not speaking harshly.
What kind of love is that?
To think otherwise
Is to tear God's name
In two.

* Micah 6:8.



אֱלֹהֵי יְיָ אֶקְרָא, וְאֶל אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן
[אֱלֹהֵי יְיָ אֶקְרָא, וְאֶל אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן]
שָׁמַע יְיָ וַחֲנֹנִי, יְיָ הִיָּה עֶזְרִי לִי
[שָׁמַע יְיָ וַחֲנֹנִי, יְיָ הִיָּה עֶזְרִי לִי]
לִמְעַן יִזְמְרָה כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם
[לִמְעַן יִזְמְרָה כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם]
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדֶךָ
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדֶךָ*

<Ei-le-kha a-do-nai ek-ra, v'el a-do-nai et-kha-nan.>
 <Sh-ma a-do-nai v'kho-nei-ni a-do-nai he-yei o-zeir li.>
 <L'ma-an y'za-mer-kha kha-vod v'lo yi-dom.>
 <A-do-nai e-lo-hai l'o-lam o-de-ka.>

To You Adonai I would call and to my Liege I would plead. . . . Listen Adonai and favor me, Adonai be a helper to me. . . , that my soul sing to You and not be silenced. Adonai, my God, forever I will thank you.

D'rash

To you Adonai I would call and to my Liege I would plead—*I turn to You for the path to my redemption, reaching within myself to find all that You have given me in the past, that you may be giving me now, or that You may give to me in the future. Listen Adonai and favor me—Sustain my faith in our covenant, that as I listen for Your will, Your Creation listens for my mitzvot, allowing their effects to ripple to the farthest reaches, defining the meaning of my life. Adonai be a helper to me—Sustain the workings of Your Creation, so that one good deed continues to draw another in its train. That my soul sing to You and not be silenced—My heart sings praises to God in the awesome recognition that I am allied with the Creator, that we are partners in tikun olam. Adonai, my God, forever I will thank you—There is within me the utter certainty that you are the source of my every moment and the choice I have to fill each of them with divine purpose.*

Iyun Tefilla

SONG WITHOUT WORDS

Like the psalmist,
 I swear not
 To be silent—
 V'lo yidom—
 Not ever.
 But who
 Could sing on
 Forever?
 And anyway,
 What is a song,
 But a robe
 For doing?
 If I want
 To refuse silence,
 Let me make
 Myself
 The garment
 For this prayer,
 And I will rise
 And be a song
 Forever.

* Psalm 30:9, 11, 13.

בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאֱמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא [בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאֱמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא],
 בָּרוּךְ עֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית, בָּרוּךְ אוֹמֵר וְעֹשֶׂה, בָּרוּךְ גּוֹזֵר וּמַקְיֵם, בָּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל
 הָאָרֶץ, בָּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת, (בָּרוּךְ) מְשַׁלֵּם שָׂכָר טוֹב לִירֵאָיו, (בָּרוּךְ) חַי
 (לְעַד) וְקִיָּם לְנֶצַח, בָּרוּךְ פּוֹדֶה וּמַצִּיל. [בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאֱמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא.
 בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאֱמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, בָּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ].

<Ba-rukh she'a-mar v'ha-ya ha-o-lam, ba-rukh hu.> Ba-rukh o-seh v'rei-shit,
 ba-rukh o-mer v'o-seh. Ba-rukh go-zeir u'm'ka-yeim, ba-rukh m'ra-kheim al ha'a-
 retz, ba-rukh m'ra-kheim al hab'ri-yot, m'sha-leim sa-khar tov li-rei-av, khai
 v'ka-yam la-ne-tzakh, ba-rukh po-deh u-ma-tzil. [Ba-rukh she'a-mar v'ha-ya
 ha-o-lam, ba-rukh hu, ba-rukh she'a-mar v'ha-ya ha-o-lam, ba-ru-kh sh'mo.]

Blessed is God Who spoke and the world came into being, Blessed is God. Blessed is God Who makes
 creation, blessed is God Who speaks and does, blessed is God Who ordains and fulfills, blessed is God Who
 has compassion on the earth, blessed is God Who has compassion on the creatures, blessed is God Who
 gives a good reward to those in awe of God, blessed is God Who lives forever and Who endures to
 eternity, blessed is God Who redeems and Who rescues, blessed is God's name.

D'rash

Blessed is God Who spoke and the world came into being, blessed is God—*We grasp two tzitzit
 and leave behind our private petitions, joining together in praise for the Source of all life and intelligence.*
Blessed is God Who makes Creation—*We are grateful to God Who made us in the divine image, free
 to partner ourselves as authors of the Creation.* **Blessed is God Who speaks and does**—*The will and
 workings of the Creator are not obscure but cause for wonder by witnesses the world over.* **Blessed is God
 Who ordains and fulfills**—*We are thankful that the Creation operates not at random but according to the
 Creator Who sustains its predictability, which we discover with Torah and confirm with science.* **Blessed
 is God Who has compassion on the earth**—*The Creator has implanted the capacity for recovery in
 virtually all life when the forces that seek to destroy it are overcome while it yet lives.* **Blessed is God Who
 gives a good reward to those in Awe of God**—*Our reward follows, first, from recognition of God's
 will; second, we must see that the power of observance is communal, not individual; and finally, we must
 acknowledge that the guarantee of reward is not quantitative but qualitative. If we observe the mitzvot as a
 community, we have it within our power to reduce our pain—the pain of loneliness in personal travail, the
 pain of inadequacy in natural catastrophe, the pain of isolation when faced with aggression.* **Blessed is
 God Who lives forever and Who endures to eternity**—*The Creator's cosmic process was for our
 ancestors as it is for us, and as it will be for our progeny; only the conditions of its application have
 changed.* **Blessed is God Who redeems and rescues**—*God's gift of redemption is to the people, the
 whole community. By doing God's will as a community, we will have done everything we can to ensure
 "our physical, social, and political well-being. . . . [and] everything else we can leave to God."* (S.R.
 Hirsch) **Blessed is God's Name**—*Our praises of God are mere "lip-service. . . . if they are not employed
 to promote the active service of God in everyday life. . . ." (S.R. Hirsch)*

Iyun Tefilla

DO NOT SAY THIS PRAYER

Do not let my lips
 Shape the word

That speaks Your name
 And my response to it.
 Let me not lisp
 Bar-ukh, bar-ukh, bar-ukh
 Without thinking
 Of how I will become
 The word.
 Let me not speak
 Until my every breath
 And beat of heart
 Intend the blessing,
 And ache
 To bind
 Your word,
 My deed,
 As one.

תּוֹרַת יְיָ תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ
 עֲדוּת יְיָ נֶאֱמָנָה מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי:
 פְּקוּדֵי יְיָ יִשְׁרִים מְשַׁמְּחֵי לֵב
 מִצְוֹת יְיָ בְּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם:
 יִרְאַת יְיָ טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד
 מִשְׁפָּטֵי יְיָ אֱמֶת, צִדְקוֹ יַחֲדוּ:
 הַנְּחַמְדִּים מְזֻהָב וּמִפָּז רַב
 וּמִתּוֹקִים מְדַבֵּשׁ וְנוֹפֵת צוּפִים:
 גַּם עַבְדְּךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשִׁמְרָם עֶקֶב רַב:*



To-rat a-do-nai t'mi-ma, m'shi-vat na-fesh.
 Ei-dut a-do-nai ne'eh-ma-na, makh-ki-mat pe-ti.
 Pi-ku-dei a-do-nai y'sha-rim, m'sam-khei leiv.
 Mitz-vat a-do-nai ba-ra, m'i-rat ei-na-yim.
 Yi-rat a-do-nai t'ho-ra, o-me-det la-ad.
 Mish'p'tei a-do-nai eh-met, tzad-ku yakh-dav.
 Ha-ne-khe-ma-dim mi-za-hav u-mi-paz rav.
 U-m'tu-kim mi-d'vash v'no-phet tzu-phim.
 Gam av-da-kha ni-z'har ba-hem b'shom'ram ei-kev rav.

The Torah of Adonai is perfect, restoring the spirit; the testimony of Adonai is trustworthy, making the simple person wise. The precepts of Adonai are upright, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of Adonai is clear, enlightening the eyes. Awe of Adonai is pure, enduring forever. The judgments of Adonai are true, altogether just. They are more desirable than gold, than even much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and drippings from the honeycombs. Moreover, your servant was warned by them, in keeping them there is great reward.

D'rash

The Torah of Adonai is perfect, restoring the spirit—*The teaching contains myriad paths, from which diligent search through prayer and study reveals the ideal that enables us to release all that is deathly in favor of that which is life-giving.* **The testimony of Adonai is trustworthy, making the simple person wise**—*The lessons from Sinai are timeless, they form the corpus of national codes everywhere, guiding us when we're vulnerable to our selfish appetites.* **The precepts of Adonai are upright, rejoicing the heart**—*The khukim and mishpatim (statutes and ordinances) reveal to us the shortest distance between any two points in life—from loneliness to family, from vulnerability to community, from poverty to productivity—which are the wellsprings of joy.* **The commandment of Adonai is clear, enlightening the eyes**—*We have only to open our minds and hearts to see that the mitzvot are not what we are compelled to do but a revelation of the consequences that will benefit or burden us if we fail to heed their call.* **Awe of Adonai is pure, enduring forever**—*Our service to God, acceptance of the challenge to ally ourselves in life-giving creation, is the result of the radical and awesome understanding of God as Gaon Hakol (Mastermind of All).* **The judgments of Adonai are true, altogether just**—*Whatever the dim antecedents or ultimate consequences of our existence, we are responsible for our own decisions and actions, and they shall survive to speak for us in both worldly courts and heavenly tribunals.* **They are more desirable than gold, than even much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and drippings from the honeycombs**—*We discover to our everlasting regret that obsession with personal physique, possessions, position, and power, and all the prestige that accompany them, leave us empty and enervated when we finally possess them.* **Moreover, your servant was warned by them, in keeping them there is great reward**—*Every lesson of Torah learned and every mitzvah accomplished is a lesson in both immediate and ultimate fulfillment, the certain satisfaction that we have used our life to its highest and best purpose.*

Iyun Tefilla

TO FEAR YOU IS TO HOLD YOU

What I want
Is to hold You
Always
Before me,
To call You
To mind
Always
In my coming
And going,
The way I carry
My children's faces
In the photo
In my wallet.
But who
Could remember
Always
A face
That's never
Seen nor held,
A face
Beyond the reach
Of time?

Your Face
I will remember
With a seed of Torah
Planted under
My tongue.

* Psalm 19:8-12.

מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים, אוֹהֵב יָמִים לְרֹאוֹת טוֹב
[מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים, אוֹהֵב יָמִים לְרֹאוֹת טוֹב]
נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֶה מֵרָע וּשְׁפָתָיו מִדְּבַר מְרֵמָה
סוֹר מֵרָע וְעֹשֶׂה טוֹב, בִּקְשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרִדְפוֹ
[מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים, אוֹהֵב יָמִים לְרֹאוֹת טוֹב]

<Mi ha-ish he-kha-feitz khai-yim,
o-heiv ya-mim lir-ot tov.>
N'tzor l'shon-kha mei-ra us-fa-te-kha mi-da-beir mir-ma.
Sur mei-ra va-a-sei tov, ba-keish sha-lom v'rod-fei-hu.
[Mi ha-ish he-kha-feitz khai-yim,
o-heiv ya-mim lir-ot tov.]

Who is the person who desires life, who loves days to see good. Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully. Turn from wrongdoing and do good—seek peace and pursue it.

D'rash

Who is the person who desires life, who loves days to see good?—How do we recognize such people? We may know them by their unstinting commitment to honor and nourish life. **Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully**—When you are tempted to do lashon hara (evil tongue or gossip) or listen to the gossip of another, as if it were innocuous banter, imagine yourself to be its subject and consider the impact on your life. **Turn from wrongdoing and do good**—It is good to refrain from lashon hara; it is better to also refuse to passively accept the lashon hara of others; but it is best to also teach lashon hara's destructive consequences for the subjects of the gossip, the listeners, the gossipers, and the community. **Seek peace and pursue it**—The root of peace (shalom) is completeness or wholeness, “. . . the reverse of every kind of separation and fragmentation” (Or Hachayim), which is the inevitable result of lashon hara.

Iyun Tefilla

WORDS WILL NEVER HURT ME

You
Who say the tongue
Requires no guard,
Watch out!
Sticks and stones

Never had it so good!
And do not say
You doubt its power!
Or the weight
Of your own
Words, words, words
Will surely
Crush you.
Try not to hurt yourself
When tripping
On your tongue.
Try to remember:
What's good for others
Is also good for you.
The same rule applies:
You may know me.
I may know you.
But none of us is known
As God knows.
I'm speaking to myself,
Of course,
I who persist in thinking
I know the truth
Of all things,
And am compelled
To say it.
Let me acknowledge
For once what
I do not know.

* Psalm 34:13-15.

[illegible]

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב,
הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים,
הוֹדוּ לַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים,
לַעֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת גְּדֻלּוֹת לְבָדּוֹ,
לַעֲשֵׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה,
לְרוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם,
לַעֲשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדֻלִּים,
אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם,
אֶת הַיָּרֵחַ וְכּוֹכָבִים לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת בַּלַּיְלָה,
לְמַכָּה מִצָּרִים בְּבִכּוּרֵיהֶם,
וַיּוֹצֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם,
בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה,

Thank God for God is good. God's kindness endures forever.
 Thank the God of gods. God's kindness endures forever.
 Thank the Master of masters. God's kindness endures forever.
 God alone performs great wonders. God's kindness endures forever.
 God makes the heavens with understanding. God's kindness endures forever.
 God spreads the earth over the waters. God's kindness endures forever.
 God made the great lights. God's kindness endures forever.
 The sun to rule by day. God's kindness endures forever.
 The moon and the stars to rule by night. God's kindness endures forever.
 God struck down Egypt through their firstborn. God's kindness endures forever.
 And God brought Israel out from their midst. God's kindness endures forever.
 With a strong hand and an outstretched arm. God's kindness endures forever.
 God divided the Sea of Reeds into parts. God's kindness endures forever.
 God passed Israel through it. God's kindness endures forever.
 God threw Pharaoh and his army into the Sea of Reeds. God's kindness endures forever.
 God led God's people through the wilderness. God's kindness endures forever.
 God struck down great kings. God's kindness endures forever.
 God destroyed mighty rulers. God's kindness endures forever.
 Sikhon, king of the Amorite. God's kindness endures forever.
 And Og, king of Bashan. God's kindness endures forever.
 And God gave their land as a heritage. God's kindness endures forever.
 A heritage for Israel, God's servant. God's kindness endures forever.
 In our lowliness God remembered us. God's kindness endures forever.
 And God freed us from our tormentors. God's kindness endures forever.
 God gives food to all flesh. God's kindness endures forever.
 Thank the Almighty of the heavens. God's kindness endures forever.

D'rash

Thank God for God is good—We have the Creator to thank for implanting goodness in the world, even while we must hold ourselves accountable to choose it over evil. **God's kindness endures forever**—Adonai unflaggingly refreshes our spirit, so that within us there is an irrepressible urge to do good, if only we will allow ourselves to respond to it. **Thank the God of gods**—We shall never be satisfied except by God's gifts, and all else that we worship, material or intangible, shall fail to fulfill us. **God alone performs great wonders**—It is Adonai alone Who directs us to reach within ourselves to find miraculous powers we don't believe we possess. **God makes the heavens with understanding**—What appears to us as unfathomable mystery, the shape and size and systemization of the universe, is but the recreation of the Creator. **God spreads the earth over the waters**—Had the Creator not created the dry lands and all that thrives upon them, we would have had no place or patrimony to sustain us. **God made the great lights**. . . . **The sun to rule by day**. . . . **The moon and the stars to rule by night**—They illuminate our landscape, shape our seas, and guide us on our way—and without them we would truly be lost. **God struck down Egypt through their firstborn**. . . . **And God brought Israel out from their midst**. . . . **With a strong hand and an outstretched arm**. . . . **God divided the Sea of Reeds into parts**. . . . **God passed Israel through it**. . . . **God threw Pharaoh and his army into the Sea of Reeds**—God transformed the ancient world from its rigid patterns of social, political, and economic life; the Exodus allowed for the possibility of liberation and personal as well as national development *l'shei m shamayim* (for the sake of heaven, i.e., in the service of God). **God led His people through the wilderness**. . . . **God struck down great kings**. . . . **God destroyed mighty rulers**. . . . **Sikhon, king of the Amorite**. . . . **And Og, king of Bashan**—The improbability of the survival of Am Yisrael (the Jewish people), in the face of impossible odds, dates from our earliest beginnings and continues throughout our history, confirming for

*all but the most incredulous that human forces alone fail to adequately explain our miraculous story. **And God gave their land as a heritage.** . . . **A heritage for Israel**—Even when not in our possession, we passed it down from generation to generation; although incapable of possessing it, we refused to let go of it; and to claim it as our birthright remains our implacable tradition. **In our lowliness God remembered us.** . . . **And God freed us from our tormentors**—Repeatedly, when by all reason our peoplehood should have ended, we outlasted our enemies, rising again and again. **God gives food to all flesh.** . . . **Thank the Almighty of the heavens**—Our food, whether for the body or the spirit, bread or Torah, has but a single Source; what sustains us comes not from the supermarket or the television. We have God and Torah to thank for the gift of life, both the seeds from which life springs and our notions of righteousness, truth, and justice, freedom, peace, and kindness that make life worth living.*

Iyun Tefilla

DID YOU EVER HEAR OF THE LEAF-CUTTER ANT?

If I forget
 The Hand
 That feeds me,
 Let me remember
 That my own hand
 Could not even imagine
 The smallest
 Of Your creations.
 Let me remember
 That last night
 While I lay sleeping,
 The ant,
 Deep in his jungle,
 Climbed up
 Into the tree
 Above his home
 And carried down
 A harvest of leaves
 Far larger
 Than himself
 On his back,
 Into a tiny room
 In the ground
 Under the tree.
 Last night
 While I lay sleeping,
 The smallest farmer
 Was sustained in
 Farming fungus
 In the dark
 By the same One
 Who let me sleep.
 Let me remember
 The Hand that sustains
 My own
 With kindness.

With kindness,
Let my own hand
Remember to sustain.

* Psalm 136.

טוב להדות לִי, ולְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵיוֹן
[טוב להדות לִי, ולְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵיוֹן]
לְהַגִּיד בַּבֶּקֶר חֶסֶדְךָ וְאַמּוֹנָתְךָ בְּלֵילוֹת:
עָלִי עֲשׂוֹר וְעָלִי נָבֵל, עָלִי הַגִּיוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר:
כִּי שִׁמְחָתָנִי יְיָ בְּפַעֲלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרָנִי:
[כִּי שִׁמְחָתָנִי יְיָ בְּפַעֲלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרָנִי]
מֵה גָדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְיָ, מֵאֵד עֲמָקוֹ מִחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ:
[מֵה גָדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְיָ, מֵאֵד עֲמָקוֹ מִחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ:]*

<Tov l'ho-dot la-do-nai, u-l'za-mer l'shim-kha el-yon.>
L'ha-gid ba-bo-ker khas-de-kha, ve'e-mu-na-t'kha ba-lei-lot.
A-lei a-sor va-a'lei na-vel, a-lei hi-ga-yon b'khi-nor.
<Ki si-makh-ta-ni a-do-nai b'fo-a-le-kha b'ma-a-sei ya-de-kha a-ra-nein.>
Ma gad-lu ma-a-se-kha a-do-nai, m'od am-ku makh-sh'vo-te-kha.

It is good to thank Adonai, and to sing praise to Your Name, Lofty One; to tell of Your kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness in the nights; on a ten (stringed instrument) and on a harp, with meditation on a lyre; for You have made me happy Adonai with Your deeds, the work of Your hands—I sing joyfully; how great are Your deeds Adonai, how very deep Your thoughts.

D'rash

It is good to thank Adonai—My gratitude is commanded, yet I'm fulfilled in it, renewed and gladdened, even without understanding my thankfulness. **And to sing praise to Your Name, Lofty One**—Praises sing themselves out of me to the name of my cosmic God. **To tell of Your goodness in the morning**—At daybreak I tell of the kindness, the blessings that God brings to me, strengthening me to deal with what I must. **And your faithfulness at night**—And in the evening, every night, I tell of God's faithfulness, looking back and remembering: I walked this day with God and Torah, and they were faithful, offering up the vision and the path. **On a ten (stringed instrument) and on a harp, with meditation on a lyre**—With music and song do I reflect upon all this. **For You have made me happy Adonai with Your deeds, the work of Your hands—I sing joyfully**—It is a great relief, a cause for joy, that I can find in Your Torah the path I am to follow. **How great are Your deeds Adonai, how very deep Your thoughts**—That You are eternally minding the whole of Creation reveals to the thoughtful, living in Your image, the grandeur of Your divine intelligence.

Iyun Tefilla

HOW CAN I SING WHEN I'M SO SAD

Of course
I will be thankful
In the morning.
But who could be thankful
For the dark?
For the panic,
Post mammogram,
At 3 a.m.?
In the dark,
I blame myself
Or, who else?
God.
Don't ask me to sing.
And yet
I may
Remind myself
The goodness
Of this world
Is greater than
I know.
And some of it is mine.
I may yet
Make my life
A cause
For gratitude.

* Psalm 92: 2-6.

צַדִּיק כַּתְמָר יִפְרָח, כְּאַרְז בְּלָבָנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה:
שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית יְיָ, בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ:
עוֹד יִנוּבוֹן בְּשִׁיבָהּ, דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ:
לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר יְיָ, צוּרֵי וְלֹא עוֹלְתָהּ בּוֹ:

Tza-dik ka-ta-mar yif-rakh, k'e-rez bal-va-non yis-geh.
Sh'tu-lim b'veit a-do-nai b'khatz-rot e-lo-hei-nu yaf-ri-khu.
Od y'nu-vun b'sei-va, d'shei-nim v'ra-a'na-nim y'hi-yu.
L'ha-gid ki ya-shar a-do-nai, tzu-ri v'lo av-la-ta bo.

The righteous will blossom like a date palm, grow tall like a cedar of Lebanon. Planted in the house of Adonai, in the courtyards of our God they will flourish. They will yet be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be—to tell that Adonai is just, my Rock, and that there is no wrong in God.

D'rash

The righteous will blossom like a date palm, grow tall like a cedar of Lebanon—When we strengthen ourselves through the struggle to do God's will, our good works have both longevity and notable effect. Planted in the House of Adonai, in the courtyards of our God they will flourish—The will to righteousness grows slowly, but when matured it resists corruption of the mind or spirit. They will yet be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be—Service to God is reciprocated; in return we receive limitless spiritual sustenance. To tell that Adonai is just, my Rock, and that there is no wrong in God—Choosing to live in the image of God, we find the shortest path, always the most efficient means to Kiddush Hashem.

Iyun Tefilla

LATE BLOOMER

Like the palm
Let me store up
Moisture
For the drought.
Let me bloom
In spite of the desert
And even bear fruit
In old age,
Sowing deeds
Like children.
Knowing
What I know now—
That children grow
To live beyond
Our reach—
I will raise them
Carefully.
May my deeds
Go forth in the world
Like beloved children.

* Psalm 92:13-16.



הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.
הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּקִדְשׁוֹ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּרִקְיעַ עֲזוֹ:
הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּגִבּוֹרֵתוֹ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּרַב גְּדֻלּוֹ:
[הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ]
הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּתַקְעַ שׁוֹפָר, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּנִבְלָ וְכִנּוֹר:
הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּתֵן וּמַחֲוֹל, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּמִנִּים וְעֶגְבִּי:
[הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ]

הַלְלוּהוּ בַּצִּלְעֵי שָׁמַע, הַלְלוּהוּ בַּצִּלְעֵי תְרוּעָה:
 כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּהְיֶה זֶה הַלְלוּיָהּ.
 כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּהְיֶה זֶה הַלְלוּיָהּ.*

<<<Ha-l'lu-ya>>> Ha-l'lu eil b'kod-sho, ha-l'lu-hu bir-kia u-zo.
 Ha-l'lu-hu vig'vu-ro-tav, ha-l'lu-hu k'rov gud-lo.
 [<<<Ha-l'lu-ya>>>]
 Ha-l'lu-hu b'tei-ka sho-far, ha-l'lu-hu b'nei-vel v'khi-nor.
 Ha-l'lu-hu b'tof u'ma-khol, ha-l'lu-hu b'mi-nim v'u-gav.
 [<<<Ha-l'lu-ya>>>]
 Ha-l'lu-hu v'tzil-tz'lei sha-ma, ha-l'lu-hu b'tzil-tz'lei t'rua.
 <Kol han-sha-ma t'ha-leil ya ha-l'lu-ya.>

Praise God. Praise the Almighty in the Sanctuary, praise God in the firmament of God's power. Praise God for God's mighty acts, praise God according to the bounty of God's greatness. Praise God with a blast of the shofar, praise God with a lyre and a harp. Praise God with drum and with dance, praise God with stringed (instruments) and flute. Praise God with cymbals resounding, praise God with cymbals arousing. Let all souls praise God. Halleluyah! Let all souls praise God. Halleluyah!

D'rash

Praise God—With word and deed, boast of God's majesty and power to those whose minds and hearts are open. **Praise the Almighty in the Sanctuary**—Praise God in all places where His Holy Name is sanctified by action that uplifts life. **Praise God in the firmament of God's power**—Praise God in all places where the order and unity of creation, from the molecular building blocks of matter to the wheeling constellations of the cosmos, is revealed. **Praise God for God's mighty acts, praise God according to the bounty of God's greatness**—Look into a wilderness night sky, ride the roiling waves of a stormy sea, resonate to the trembling of an earthquake, and acknowledge the power that is masterminding creation. **Praise God with a blast of the shofar, praise God with a lyre and a harp**—The shofar calls us to do God's will; the harp and lyre help us contemplate our moral and ethical abilities. **Praise God with a drum and with dance, praise God with stringed (instruments) and flute**—Our praises must not be solitary and silent; they must be communal and joyful to have useful effect; so we are to dance and sing our praises. **Praise God with cymbals resounding, praise God with cymbals arousing**—Let us stir ourselves to broadcast the benchmark of our peoplehood to all the nations. **Let all souls praise God**—May each of us, with every breath, recognize the presence of God in every facet of Creation.

Iyun Tefilla

GOD IN ALL THINGS

How could heaven
 Be contained
 In a wildflower?
 Surely God's touch
 Is there
 Waking the bloom,
 But not the Hand.
 Nor could the heavens

Themselves,
 That blue bowl
 For all the stars,
 Contain It.
 As the blossom strives
 To turn itself
 Out of the seed,
 Let me strive
 To become
 The vessel
 That reveals
 Your touch.

* Psalm 150.



אֲזַי יִשִּׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה, וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר: אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי
 גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס וָרֶכֶב וְרָמָה בָּיָם: עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יִהְיֶה לִּי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאַנְוֶהוּ
 אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וְאַרְמְמֶנְהוּ: יְיָ אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְיָ שְׁמוֹ: מִרְכַּבַּת פָּרְעָה וַחֲיִלוֹ יְהוָה בָּיָם,
 וּמִבְּחַר שְׁלֹשִׁיו טָבְעוּ בַיָּם סוּף: תִּהְיֶה יְכֻסִּימוּ יִרְדּוּ בַמַּצּוֹלֹת כְּמוֹ אֲבִן: יְמִינָהּ יְיָ
 נֹאדְרֵי בִכְחַי, יְמִינָהּ יְיָ תִרְעֹץ אוֹיֵב: וּבִרְבַּ גְּאוּנָה תִהְרַס קִמְיָה תִשְׁלַח חֲרֹנֶה יֹאכְלֶמּוּ
 כֶּקֶשׁ: וּבְרוּחַ אַפִּיקָה נִעְרְמוּ מֵיָם נִצְבּוּ כְמוֹ גֵּד נִזְלִים, קָפְאוּ תִהְיֶה בְּלֹב יָם: אָמֵן

אֵיב אֶרְדֹּף אֲשִׁיג אֶחָלֵק שָׁלַל תִּמְלֹאמוּ נִפְשִׁי, אֶרִיק חֲרָבִי תוֹרִישְׁמוּ יָדִי: נִשְׁפֹּת
 בְּרוּחֶךָ בְּסָמוּי, צָלְלוּ בְּעוֹפֶרֶת בְּמִים אֲדִירִים: מִי כִמְכָה בְּאֵלִם יְיָ, מִי כִמְכָה
 נֶאֱדָר בְּקִדְשׁ, נוֹרָא תִהְלֵת עֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא [מִי כִמְכָה בְּאֵלִם יְיָ, מִי כִמְכָה נֶאֱדָר בְּקִדְשׁ,
 נוֹרָא תִהְלֵת עֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא]*

Az ya-shir mo-she u-v'nei yis-ra-el et ha-shi-ra ha-zot la-do-nai va-yom-ru lei-
 mor: a-shi-ra la-do-nai ki ga-o ga-a, sus v'rokh-vo ra-ma va-yam. O-zi v'zim-rat ya
 va-y'hi li li-shu-a zeh ei-li v'an-vei-hu e-lo-hei a-vi va-a'ro-m'men'hu. A-do-nai
 ish mil-kha-ma, a-do-nai sh'mo. Mar-k'vot par-o v'khei-lo ya-ra va-yam u-mi-
 v'khar sha-li-shav tu-b'u v'yam suf. T'ho-mot y'khas-yu-mu, yar-du vim-tzo-lot
 k'mo a-ven. Y'min-kha a-do-nai ne-da-ri ba-ko-akh, y'min-kha a-do-nai tir-atz
 o-yeiv. U-v'rov g'o-n'kha ta-ha-ros ka-me-kha t'sha-lakh kha-ro-n'kha yokh-lei-
 mo ka-kash. U-v'ru-akh a-pe-kha ne-eir-mu ma-yim nitz-vu kh'mo neid noz-lim,
 kaf-u t'ho-mot b'lev yam. A-mar o-yeiv eir-dof a-sig a-kha-leik sha-lal tim-la-ei-
 mo naf-shi, a-rik khar-bi to-ri-shei-mo ya-di. Na-shaf-ta v'ru-kha-kha ki-sa-mo
 yam, tza'l'lu ka-o-fe-ret b'ma-yim a-di-rim. <Mi kha-mo-kha ba-ei-lim a-do-nai,
 mi ka-mo-kha ne'dar ba-ko-desh, no-ra t'hi-lot o-sei fe-le.>

Then Moses and the Children of Israel sang this song to Adonai, and they spoke saying: I will sing to Adonai for God is most high, horse and its rider God threw into the sea. My strength and my song of praise is God and God is my salvation. This is my God and I will glorify God [by dedicating my mind and body as a place for God], the God of my parents, and I will hold God high. Adonai is a warrior, Adonai is God's name. Pharaoh's chariots and army God threw into the sea; and the select of his officers were entangled in the Sea of Reeds. Deep waters covered them; they descended into the depths like stone. Your right hand, Adonai, endowed with strength; Your right hand, Adonai, smashes the enemy. In Your expansive majesty, You destroy those who rise up against You. You send Your anger, it consumes them like straw. And with the wind from Your nostrils the waters were piled up, the flowing water upright as a wall, the depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said: I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide loot, my desires will be gratified. I will draw my sword, my hand will dispossess them. You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them. The mighty ones sank like lead in waters. Who is like You among the gods, Adonai; who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome [in virtues eliciting] praise, doing wonders.

D'rash

Then Moses and the Children of Israel sang this song to Adonai—They knew that although their own will had brought them into the sea, it was God's will that they traversed it successfully, while the Egyptians were drowned. And they spoke saying: I will sing to Adonai for God is most high, horse and rider God threw into the sea—The events of the day made clear that not the Israelites but God had vanquished the Egyptians. My strength and my song of praise is God, and I will glorify God [by dedicating my mind and body as a place for God], the God of my parents, and I will hold God high—The courage of the people was extraordinary, but even the least of them could see that the outstretched arm of God was miraculous, producing a result that all would have declaimed as impossible if asked beforehand. Adonai is a warrior, Adonai is God's name—Our God has arranged the workings of the world so that those who suffer injustice, oppression, and poverty may ally themselves with the Freedom-Fighter of human liberation. Pharaoh's chariots and army, God threw into the sea; and the select of his officers were entangled in the Sea of Reeds. Deep waters covered them, they descended into the depths like stone—The price of liberty, not only release from bondage but freedom to choose service to the One God, was set not by the Almighty but by those who sought to thwart God's providence for Am

Yisrael. Your right hand, Adonai, endowed with strength; Your right hand, Adonai, smashes the enemy—*This allegorical symbol of strength reminds us that the Creator has arranged for the ultimate denouement of all evil-doing. In Your expansive majesty, You destroy those who rise up against You—Our sensitivities and sensibilities notwithstanding, the inescapable lesson of history is that the price of radical evil is utter destruction, and usually sooner than later. You send Your anger, it consumes them like straw—Evil-doing, containing as it does the seeds of its own destruction, is highly volatile and reactive when confronted with countervailing power, since those who practice it rely on passivity, acquiescence, and intimidation to succeed. And with the wind from Your nostrils, the waters were piled up, the flowing water upright as a wall, the depths congealed in the heart of the sea—The triumph of God's glorious goodness over evil, the unstoppable alliance of human and divine forces, has no limits in method or outcome—the miraculous can become momentarily commonplace, the wondrous temporarily workaday. The enemy said: I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide loot, my desires will be gratified—The delusion of evil-doers is that they are the masters of their personal destiny and human history, that ultimate victory will be theirs, blinded as they are by their arrogance to the verity of God's immanent and transcendent dominion in human affairs. I will draw my sword, my hand will dispossess them—The enemy of Am Yisrael fatally errs in the conviction that victory follows inevitably from military might, ignoring the effect of the spirit and the love of God. You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them. The mighty ones sank like lead in waters—How quickly do the tales of their strength and power recede, to be replaced with long-lived revulsion at their tyranny and inhumanity. Who is like You among the gods, Adonai; who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome [in virtues eliciting] praise, doing wonders—When we strip the scales from our eyes, calculating from our experience the quotient of Divine Intelligence, we confront the supranatural—not the magic and mumbo-jumbo of the Wizard of Oz, but the certainty that deep in the infrastructure of Creation dwells our Loving Parent, to whom we are inextricably connected in ways that are not inherently unknowable yet to us shall always remain unknown.*

Iyun Tefilla

LOCOMOTION

If I say
 Anveihu,* *
 Do I become
 The space through
 Which You move?
 A room
 For Your Shekhina
 Here on earth?
 No, not a room,
 But a ring of steel,
 A whirling wheel,
 And You
 The bounding pistons,
 Rocking gears!
 Roll on
 Freedom train!
 To hasten toward
 A kindness
 We fly across
 The land,
 The freight we haul

Is mitzvahs
By the ton.
Drive!
Drive the world
Toward freedom!
Drive the world
To know:
Being free
Means setting free.

* Exodus 15:1-11. ** A reference to God as the "force that moves me." (S.R. Hirsch)

נְשַׁמַּת כָּל חַי, תְּבָרַךְ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ. [נְשַׁמַּת כָּל חַי, תְּבָרַךְ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ] וְרוּחַ כָּל בָּשָׂר, תִּפְאֵר וְתִרְוַם זִכְרְךָ מְלִכְנוּ תָמִיד. [נְשַׁמַּת כָּל חַי, תְּבָרַךְ
אֶת שְׁמֶךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.]

<Nish-mat kol khai, t'va-reikh et shim-kha a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu.> V'ru-akh kol
ba-sar t'fa-eir ut-ro-meim zikh-r'kha mal-kei-nu ta-mid. [Nish-mat kol khai,
t'va-reikh et shim-kha a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu.]

The soul of every living being shall bless Your Name, Adonai our God. The spirit of all flesh shall glorify and raise up Your remembrance, our Ruler forever.

D'rash

The soul of every living being shall bless Your Name, Adonai our God. The spirit of all flesh shall glorify and raise up Your remembrance, our Ruler forever—*Even when we ungratefully bless God exclusively with words, in the absence of deeds, our very existence—that we live (in spirit) and breathe—nonetheless confirms that the Creator's handiwork is praised by us beyond measure.*

Iyun Tefilla

BREATHE IN, BREATHE OUT

What can I do
To bless You?
Even the stars,
By their existence
Praise You,
And the moon too,
Just by hanging there.
And this breath
I am breathing
Just now,
That too
Proclaims You.
That too

Belongs to You.
So what can
I bring?
I bring
Knowing
That to be
Is not to live,
To really live.
I bring You
This breath
Breathed
In making
A blessing
Of myself.

אור קדש על ציון תאיר [אור קדש על ציון תאיר] ונזכה כלנו מהרה לאורו
[מהרה לאורו, ונזכה כלנו מהרה לאורו, מהרה לאורו, אור קדש על ציון
תאיר, אור קדש על ציון תאיר]

<Or kha-dash al tzi-on ta-ir.> <V'niz-ke khu-la-nu <m'hei-ra l'o-ro>.>

May You shine a new light on Zion and may all of us be worthy, speedily, of its light (shining on us).

D'rash

May You shine a new light on Zion and may all of us be worthy, speedily, of its light (shining on us)—*May the original illumination of Your Creation, before its human corruption, be recovered. And may each of us do our part to restore the light by hastening the days of Mashiakh.*

Iyun Tefilla

LIFE AS A LAMP

In our hands
You laid the light.
Or rather
Its possibility.
For You said
That our souls
Could be Your lamp
In a world full
Of dark places.
Help me then,
To understand
The dark
To be the place
Where light

May enter.
 And Help me
 Find the door
 To open,
 The threshold
 Of a soul
 Where I may offer
 Wings of words
 With which to sail
 The light.

אֱמֶת וַיֵּצִיב וְנִכּוֹן וְקִים וַיֵּשֶׁר וְנֶאֱמַן וְאֶהוּב וְחָבִיב וְנִחְמָד וְנִעִים וְנוֹרָא וְאֲדִיר
 וּמִתְקַן וּמִקְבָּל וְטוֹב וַיִּפֶּה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד [לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד].

E-met v'ya-tsiv v'na-khon v'ka-yam v'ya-shar v'ne-e-man v'a-huv v'kha-viv
 v'nekh-mad v'na-im v'no-ra v'a-dir u-m'tu-kan u-m'ku-bal v'tov v'ya-feh ha-da-var
 ha-zeh a-lei-nu l'o-lam va-ed <l'o-lam va-ed>.

True and certain, established and enduring, upright and faithful, beloved and cherished, delightful and pleasant, awesome and mighty, correct and accepted, good and beautiful is this word to us for all eternity.

D'rash

True and certain—That which came before this—our declaration that You are One, that we must repeat and teach Your Torah, and that we shall be lost if we fail to do Your will—is beyond question or doubt: we know the truth of it with utter certainty. **Established and enduring**—Though we are plagued with doubts and questions about ourselves and our lives, fearful of our own frailties, we are confident that You are the Eternal One, that You were present for those who came before us, and that You shall remain for all who come after us. **Upright and faithful**—When we emulate You, living in Your image by honoring Your Torah, we and all those who learn from us are raised up and made faithful to You. **Beloved and cherished**—You are our Beloved, in whom we live, and we cherish You when, by our deeds, we invite Your Shekhina into our world. **Awesome and mighty**—We are compelled by Your creation and its laws, the continuity of our lives and communities bound to our recognition of Your power and dominion. **Correct and accepted**—We are grateful that You have revealed in Your Torah the order of Your Creation, the blessings and commandments we need to fulfill our covenant with you. **Good and beautiful is this word to us for all eternity**—We declare, to ourselves and to the world beyond us, that only goodness and beauty will ever follow from affirming Your Oneness, learning and teaching Your Torah, and doing Your will.

Iyun Tefilla

READ THE MANUAL

Looking
 Into the Torah,
 Before creating the world,
 Did God stop to think
 About people like me

And what would happen
 Once the world
 Was put into our hands,
 Given how we are,
 About testing the rules
 And pushing limits?
 See, I think
 God knew all about
 People like me and
 What might happen,
 But just went ahead
 With the plan
 Anyway,
 Knowing
 That in spite of
 Our nature,
 If the nature
 Of the creation
 Is such that
 If I jump
 Into the deep end
 Of the pool
 And I don't wave
 My legs and arms,
 I will drown.
 As with everything
 Else in life,
 I may refuse.
 I may say:
 I DON'T LIKE THIS RULE!
 Or even,
 YOU CAN'T MAKE ME LIVE BY THIS RULE!
 I will still drown.

אֲדֹנָי
 אֲדֹנָי שְׁפָתַי
 אֲדֹנָי שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח
 וּפִי
 וּפִי יִגִּיד
 וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ
 אֲדֹנָי שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:
 [אֲדֹנָי שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ]

[A-do-nai
 A-do-nai s'fa-tai
 A-do-nai s'fa-tai tif-takh
 U-fi

U-fi ya-gid
U-fi ya-gid t'hi-la-te-kha.]
A-do-nai s'fa-tai tif-takh u-fi ya-gid t'hi-la-te-kha.

My Liege, open my lips that my mouth may declare Your praise.

D'rash

My Liege, open my lips that my mouth may declare Your praise—*May these words, before reading the Amidah silently, bolster our kavvanah (focused intention) when our community's combined voices, and the spiritual nourishment they provide, recedes.*

Iyun Tefilla

LIPSERVICE

My Master,
Adonai,
By this name
I call You
As did Your prophets.
By this name I ask:
Please open my lips.
Open my heart
To Your will.
For to praise You
And not to serve
Is to praise nothingness,
And to make a god
Of words,
While You,
Master of all worlds,
Have no need
For words
Alone.
Nora t'hilot
They sang
At the edge of the sea,
Fearing to praise.
And I too fear
To praise You,
Without deeds.
Unless I can count
Myself among the servants,
I will not praise
At all.

יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמַתָּנַת חֶלְקוֹ, כִּי עֶבֶד נֶאֱמָן קָרָאתָ לוֹ.
 כְּלִיל תִּפְאֶרֶת בְּרָאשׁוֹ נָתַתָּ בְּעַמְדוֹ לִפְנֵיךָ עַל הָר סִינַי.
 וּשְׁנֵי לוחֹת אֲבָנִים הוֹרִיד בְּיָדוֹ, וְכָתוּב בָּהֶם שְׁמִירַת
 שַׁבָּת. וְכֵן כָּתוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ:



Yis-makh mo-she b'mat-nat khel-ko, ki e-ved ne-e'man ka-ra-ta lo. K'lil tif-e-ret
 b'ro-sho na-ta-ta, b'om-do l'fa-ne-kha al har si-nai. Ush-nei lu-khot a-va-nim
 ho-rid b'ya-do, v'kha-tuv ba-hem sh'mi-rat sha-bat, v'khein ka-tuv b'to-ra-te-kha.

Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion; for You called him a faithful servant. A crown of glory You placed on his head when he stood before You on Mount Sinai. He brought down two stone tablets in his hand, on which is inscribed the observance of the Sabbath. And so it is written in Your Torah.

D'rash

Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion—*That even as a child he was given the opportunity to ask Pharaoh to grant a day of rest to the Jewish slaves, to serve both God and Am Yisrael. For You called him a faithful servant*—*He was chosen not to author but to receive, record, and disseminate the teachings of Torah, which was enough to shower him with honor ever since. A crown of glory You placed on his head when he stood before You on Mount Sinai*—*He was invested with the Torah's wisdom (righteous judgment) to be a leader and judge, responsibilities that are undermined more often by moral and ethical lapses than deficiency in worldly knowledge or skill. He brought down two stone tablets in his hand, on which is inscribed the observance of the Sabbath*—*Because the people had gone beyond idolatrous worship to incest and the murder of Hur, jeopardizing the very survival of their newly acquired peoplehood by wholesale rejection of Torah, he cast down the first set of tablets and smashed them. The people were unworthy of the Torah, their rejection of its gifts had already broken its spirit among them, so by smashing the tablets Moses compelled them to confront what they had forsaken. And so it is written in Your Torah*—"The people Israel shall observe Shabbat, to make Shabbat an eternal covenant throughout their generations," and although Moses broke the first set of tablets beneath the mount, in the precinct of the holy place in which they had been given by God, so clear was his purpose and his knowledge that the tablets were only a symbol, that neither God nor Torah nor Shabbat could in any way be diminished by shattering them but, on the contrary, could only be strengthened.

Iyun Tefilla

GLADDEN MY HEART

Did Moses
 Dream his way
 Down the mountain,
 Happy just
 Thinking of
 The sweet gift
 He would bring
 To gladden their hearts
 Like a bridegroom
 With a bouquet of roses?

And did he dream
The gift
Would reach
To my heart too?
Let me rejoice now
In my portion—
The gift of
This Shabbat.
May it enter my heart
And the heart of
This home.



וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת, לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת
לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם. בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִיא לְעָלָם
[בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִיא לְעָלָם], כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים
עָשָׂה יְיָ אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ [שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ], וּבַיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ [שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת
וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ, שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ].*

V'sham-ru v'nei yis-ra-el et-ha-sha-bat, la-a-sot et-ha-sha-
bat l'do-ro-tam b'rit o-lam. Bei-ni u-vein b'nei yis-ra-el ot
hi l'o-lam, ki shei-shet ya-mim a-sa a-do-nai et-ha-sha-ma-yim v'et-ha-a-retz,
u-va-yom hash-vi-i sha-vat va-yi-na-fash.

And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath an everlasting covenant for their generations. Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever that in six days Adonai made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day God rested and was refreshed.

D'rash

And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath—*We are commanded to maintain a watch over one day in the week that is set apart from the other six days of the week to enable the emergence of our Neshama Yetarah (extra soul). The extra soul has room for rest and joy, both for the loved ones God has brought to us and for our love of God Who has brought them. To make the Sabbath an everlasting covenant for their generations—***We are to plan and make preparations that welcome and honor the Sabbath Queen and Bride, to follow the Shabbat mitzvot so that we may refresh ourselves in the beauty of Shabbat, and thus bequeath a living inheritance to our children and grandchildren. Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever that in six days Adonai made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day God rested and was refreshed—***Our Holy Writings tell not of a worldly law that allows a day of rest but a holy ordinance legislated in the image of the Almighty, not to be surrendered to worldly interests or sundered by them.*

Iyun Tefilla

7-DAY COMPASS

You said
That if I wanted
To keep
My world
From spinning
Out of control
I would have
To give up control;
I would need,
To withdraw
Into my own essence
As You did
On the seventh day.
You said:
Bring me
Six days
Of good work.
And lay them down.
And the six will receive
Their measure
From the One.
And if I did, then
I could keep
My little world
On its axis
And know
My place.
And if I didn't, then
I would have to
Navigate the night
Without the stars,
And sail
Without a map,
And maybe
Never even know
The journey's end.
So here I am,
Bringing You
Six good days,
Which I'm sure
You know
Are also
Six hard days.
Though they count
For little
In this world,
I lay them down.

Please take them
From me
And grant me
My compass.

* Exodus 31:16-17.

עם מְקַדְשִׁי [עם מְקַדְשִׁי] שְׂבִיעִי, כָּלֵם יִשְׁבְּעוּ וְיִתְעַנְּגוּ מִטוֹבָה, וְהַשְׂבִּיעִי רְצִיתָ בּוֹ
וְקִדְשָׁתוּ, חֲמֻדַּת יָמִים [חֲמֻדָּה] אוֹתוֹ קָרָאתָ, זָכַר לַמַּעֲשֶׂה [לַמַּעֲשֶׂה] בְּרֵאשִׁית.
[זָכַר לַמַּעֲשֶׂה, לַמַּעֲשֶׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית. עִם מְקַדְשִׁי, שְׂבִיעִי, כָּלֵם יִשְׁבְּעוּ
וְיִתְעַנְּגוּ מִטוֹבָה]

<Am m'ka-d'shei> sh'vi-i, ku-lam yis-b'u v'yit-an-gu mi-tu-ve-kha, v'hash-vi-i
ra-tzi-ta bo v'ki-dash-to, khem-dat ya-mim [khem-da] o-to ka-ra-ta, <zei-kher
<l'ma-a-sei> v'rei-shit.>

The people that sanctifies the seventh [day], they will all be satisfied and delighted by Your goodness. And the seventh [day], You found favor in it and sanctified it. “Most coveted of days,” [delight] You called it, a memorial to the act of Creation.

D'rash

The people that sanctifies the seventh [day], they will all be satisfied and delighted by Your goodness—*Not the individual but the people that sanctifies the seventh day, together in community; they will realize their highest spiritual potential, individually and collectively, which is the foundation for human happiness. And the seventh [day], You found favor in it and sanctified it—The seventh day was set aside and dedicated, for the sake of humankind, because while we are little more than dust, we are also only a little lower than the angels. “Most coveted of days,” You called it, a memorial to the act of Creation—Who would not prefer rest to toil, learning to labor, time to clock-watching, freedom to slavery, loving to litigating, singing to shouting, beauty to banality, and community to isolation—all made possible by respite from creation.*

Iyun Tefilla

CARAVAN TO THE OASIS

Listen!
Do you hear it?
Put your ear
To the ground.
You can feel it
Six days away!
The caravan is coming!
Let its
Swaying camels,
Trembling bells

Carry you
Back
From the desert,
Back to palms
And pools of water,
Honey and dates.
Don't be late!
You don't want to miss
The last ride home!

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, רִצֵּה בְּמִנוּחָתֵנוּ, קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
שְׂבַעֲנוּ מְטוֹבֶךָ וְשִׂמְחָנוּ בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ, וְטִהַר לִבֵּנוּ לְעִבְדֶּךָ בְּאַמֶּת, וְהִנְחִילֵנוּ יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן שְׁבֵת קִדְּשָׁךְ, וְיִנוּחוּ בָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִקִּדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ.

E-lo-hei-nu vei-lo-hei a-vo-tei-nu, r'tzei vim-nu-kha-tei-nu. Ka-d'shei-nu b'mitz-vo-
te-kha v'tein khel-kei-nu b'to-ra-te-kha, sab-ei-nu mi-tu-ve-kha v'sam-khei-nu
bi-shu-a-te-kha, v'ta-heir li-bei-nu l'ov-d'kha be-e-met, v'han-khi-lei-nu a-do-nai
e-lo-hei-nu b'a-ha-va u-v'ra-tzon sha-bat kod-she-kha, v'ya-nu-khu va yis-ra-el
m'ka-d'shei sh'me-kha.

Our God and the God of our ancestors, may You be pleased with our rest. Sanctify us with Your commandments and give us our portion in Your Torah; satisfy us from Your goodness and hearten us with Your salvation, and purify our heart to serve You in truth. Adonai, our God, with love and favor grant us Your holy Sabbath as a heritage, and may Israel, those who sanctify Your Name, rest on it. Blessed are You, Adonai, Who sanctifies the Sabbath.

D'rash

Our God and the God of our ancestors, may You be pleased with our rest—May we, through Your mitzvot, know the gift of Your Shabbat. Separate us and dedicate us to the unique path of our peoplehood, removed from the materialism and violence that surrounds us. Sanctify us with Your commandments and give us our portion in Your Torah; satisfy us from Your goodness and hearten us with Your salvation, and purify our heart to serve You in truth—Let all who love God unite to do good, with simkha shel mitzvah (joy of the mitzvah), to attain our common salvation, the seal of our spirit l'sheim shamayim. Adonai, our God, with love and favor grant us Your holy Sabbath as a heritage, and may Israel, those who sanctify Your Name, rest on it—Rebuke us when we lapse in welcoming Your Shabbat, and let the consequences of our failures fall heavily upon us, so that Your treasured seventh day never slips through our fingers because we are obsessed with sating our senses.

Iyun Tefilla

DISSATISFY MY HEART

For any goodness
But Yours.
Teach it to demand
Your presence

In my every act.
 And if I should
 Go away from You,
 Oh God,
 Turn back my heart
 With desire.
 Teach it to expect
 Only You
 To arrive
 In my every
 Moment.



יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ. בֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן
 יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַחֲנֶנֶּה. בֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן
 יֵשׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיֵשֶׁם לָךְ שָׁלוֹם. בֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן

Y'va-re-kh'kha a-do-nai v'yish-m're-kha. Kein y'hi ra-tzon.
 Ya-eir a-do-nai pa-nav ei-le-kha vi-khu-ne-ka. Kein y'hi ra-tzon.
 Yi-sa a-do-nai pa-nav ei-le-kha v'ya-seim l'kha sha-lom. Kein y'hi ra-tzon.

May you find harmony with the divine, shelter and light.
 May the wonder of the infinite shine, gracious and warm.
 And may our holy God be in our heart, < <compassion and peace> >.*

D'rash

May God bless you and keep you—May we always remember that God's creation is much richer than we can comprehend, and our material wants are satisfied when we open ourselves to its blessings and commandments. **May God's face light you and grace you**—Since we are blessed by God with the capacity to understand Torah, we may use that understanding to attain spiritual fulfillment through "insight into God's management in history and of our own mission and tasks in life" (S.R. Hirsch), so that we may be "gracious to one another and compassionate to one another" (Numbers Rabbah 11:6). **May**

God face you and give you peace—*May we always exert ourselves to seek the face of God, the divine path of Torah, so that we pursue peace beyond ourselves, in our family and community, the reward for which is to be enlightened, and liberated from our private anxieties and depression.*

Iyun Tefilla

WHEN YOU LIFTED UP YOUR HANDS, AARON

Did it occur to you that
They were created
For just that moment?
And when you said
Vayisa Adonai panav eilekha,
Could you imagine
God's face
Turning to you?
Or, like the rest of us
Were you worried
About all the mistakes,
Wondering,
Would you be worthy
Of the blessing?
Would God want you?
Given what happened
With the calf and so on.
And when you did raise
Your hands,
And God did turn,
Did you finally understand
That it meant you?
That your hands
Could rise
To God's purpose?
That God's face could
Turn to you?
That you, like us,
Were the purpose
God had in mind
From the beginning?

* Interpretive translation of the Hebrew above, from Leviticus 6:24-26.

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם בְּעוֹלָם [שִׁים שְׁלוֹם בְּעוֹלָם] טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה, חֵן וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים, עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמָּךְ. בְּרַכְנוּ, אָבִינוּ, כְּלָנוּ בְּאֶחָד בְּאוֹר פְּנִיָּה, כִּי בְּאוֹר פְּנִיָּה נִתְּתָה
לָנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, תּוֹרַת חַיִּים וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד, וְצִדְקָה וּבְרָכָה וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשְׁלוֹם
[וְשְׁלוֹם], וְטוֹב בְּעִינֶיךָ [וְטוֹב בְּעִינֶיךָ] לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמָּךְ [אֶת עַמָּךְ] יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל עֵת
וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוּמֶךָ [בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוּמֶךָ].

<Sim sha-lom ba-o-lam,> tov-a u-v'ra-kha, khein va-khe-sed v'ra-kha-mim a-lei-nu v'al kol yis-ra-el a-me-kha. Bar-khei-nu a-vi-nu ku-la-nu k'e-khad b'or pa-ne-kha, ki v'or pa-ne-kha na-ta-ta la-nu, a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu, to-rat kha-yim v'a-ha-vat khe-sed, utz-da-ka u-v'ra-kha v'ra-kha-mim v'kha-yim <v'sha-lom>, <v'tov b'ei-ne-kha> l'va-reikh <et am-kha> yis-ra-el <b'khol-eit u-v'khol sha-a bish-lo-me-kha>.

Make peace in the world—goodness, blessing, graciousness, kindness, and compassion on us and on all of Your people Israel. Bless us, our Parent, all of us as one, with the light of Your mien, for with the light of Your mien You gave us, Adonai, our God, the Torah of life and a love of kindness, righteousness, blessing, compassion, life, and peace. And may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel, at all times and in every hour with Your peace.

D'rash

Make peace in the world—goodness, blessing, graciousness, kindness, and compassion on us and on all of Your people Israel—*May You continue creating a world for us to complete and heal through our struggles to know righteousness and to lessen pain and degradation, always sensitive to the dangers of both order and disorder, always valuing both the individual and the community. Bless us, our Parent, all of us as one, with the light of Your mien, for with the light of Your mien You gave us, Adonai our God, the Torah of life and a love of kindness, righteousness, blessing, compassion, life, and peace—We accept that Your blessings are given to us as a people; that it is not our family, congregation, or community You favor, but klal Yisrael; thus we acknowledge our need for Your light, to illuminate the path of respect, lovingkindness, and unity between ourselves and other Jews, regardless of past disagreements or strife. And may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel, at all times and in every hour with Your peace—May our commitments and our actions that unify us as a people open the heavens to a shower of blessings, especially shalom, because together we will have acknowledged our common heritage and future as a holy nation.*

Iyun Tefilla

REFLECTION

We do not see
Your face,
But in its light
We come to see
Ourselves
For what
We dare to be—
A mirror.
In that light
We are all shining
And able
As new moons
To rise and struggle
With the night
And fling
Reflected glory
Deep into the dark.

In that light
We come to see
Ourselves
As one.
In that light
We can see forever.

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
[עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ].

<O-sei sha-lom bim-ro-mav, hu ya-a'sei sha-lom a-lei-nu, v'al kol yis-ra-el v'im'ru a-mein.> O-sei sha-lom bim-ro-mav, hu ya-a'sei sha-lom a-lei-nu.

May God who makes peace in the high heavens, may God make peace upon us and upon all Israel. Now say: Amein.

D'rash

May God who makes peace in the high heavens, may God make peace upon us and upon all Israel. Now say: Amein—*May we be given to understand from the One Who masterminds the harmony of all creation, how we are to repair the world and restore Am Yisrael as a people unified by love of Torah and holy service in everyday life.*

Iyun Tefilla

ALL THINGS ARE MADE OF SMALLER THINGS

“Acts of kindness bring about great peace.”
—Rabbi Eliezer ben R.Yose

What does it take
To bring about
The kingdom of God on earth?
We search
And never know
The kingdom's end.
We strain
To find an order in the skies,
To find our place
And count our part.
The moon, the stars—
Which are we?
Dust.
Small stones
Skipped into a summer sea.
And yet,

The largest things
 Are made of smaller things.
 Drops divide the waters of the sea,
 And drops divide those drops.
 And sands of moons
 And distant stars
 Are also small.
 And none is lost.
 And so
 Are all small acts of kindness
 Like drops of water
 That can wear away a stone
 To its very heart,
 Or make a well
 Spring up,
 Or wash away
 A shadow on a soul
 And help to bring it
 In the light.
 Which are we?
 And where?
 A little lower
 Than the angels.



בָּרוּךְ הָבָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, בִּרְכוּנוֹכֶם מִבֵּית יְהוָה.
 [בָּרוּךְ הָבָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, בִּרְכוּנוֹכֶם מִבֵּית יְהוָה]
 אֵל יְהוָה וַיָּאֵר לָנוּ.
 [אֵל יְהוָה וַיָּאֵר לָנוּ]
 אֶסְרוּ חַג בְּעִבְתִּים עַד קִרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.
 [אֶסְרוּ חַג בְּעִבְתִּים עַד קִרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ]
 אֵלֵינוּ אֵתְהָ וְאֹדֶךְ אֱלֹהֵי אֲרוֹמְמָךְ.
 [אֵלֵינוּ אֵתְהָ וְאֹדֶךְ אֱלֹהֵי אֲרוֹמְמָךְ]
 הוֹדוּ לִי כִי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדְךָ.
 [הוֹדוּ לִי כִי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדְךָ]*

<Ba-rukh ha-ba b'sheim a-do-nai, bei-rakh-nu-khem mi-beit a-do-nai.>

<Eil a-do-nai va-ya-eir la-nu.>

<Is-ru khag ba-a-vo-tim ad kar-not ha-miz-bei-akh.>

<Ei-li a-ta v'o-de-ka e-lo-hai a-ro-m'me-ka.>

<Ho-do l-do-nai ki tov, ki l'o-lam khas-do.>

Blessed is the one who comes with the name of Adonai. We bless you from the house of Adonai. Adonai is God Who has given us light. Bind the festival offering with cords up to the corners of the altar. You are my Almighty and I will thank You, my God I will exalt You. Give thanks to God for goodness, for God's kindness is infinite.

D'rash

Blessed with the name of Adonai is the one who comes—*It is the Creator who has bestowed the fullness of blessing on all that comes to life. Yet it is for us who are blessed to form the holy community that will enable the full realization of that blessing in ourselves, and to show lovingkindness to others so that they may join us in that fullness.* **We bless you from the house of Adonai**—*We are the builders of the house of Adonai, because we have been blessed by God with the tools; but it is our will and energy that draw the materials together to create the sanctuary for our service to God. We are bidden to build it at home, at work, at play, going back and forth, in the light and dark.* **Adonai is God who has given us light**—*The light shines upon us, with its myriad blessings and paths, but it is we who must open our own hearts to it and then create the openings for others, so that together we may see the light of Torah and mitzvot.* **Bind the festival offering with cords up to the corners of the altar**—*When we join together with our people around the sacred place where we are to make our offering of prayers, we come not asking for blessings but pledging to be a blessing—certain in our conviction and commitments, having them “bound up with cords,” before we come to declare them in the sanctuary.* **You are my Almighty and I will thank You, my God I will exalt You**—*I am able to sustain my conviction and commitments because I recognize that your Divine Intelligence is masterminding not only the infinity of creation but the moment to moment circumstances of my life.* **Give thanks to God for goodness, for God's kindness is infinite**—*That you allow the redemption of myself, my people, and all of humankind, despite our failings and foibles, is kindness beyond measure.*

Iyun Tefilla

A WALK IN THE DARK

When the last
Lamppost
Is far behind,
And there is no path,
Give me Your Name
To keep me
In the ways of blessing.
Better yet,
Give me
The dark
To kindle
Into blessing!
Give me Your light
With which to penetrate
The night
And reach
Beyond the furthest lamp,
Beyond the furthest dark.

* Psalm 118:26-29.



מִי שִׁבְרָךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, וְאִמֵּנוּ
שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, הוּא יְבָרֶךְ וַיְרַפָּא אֶת־
הַחוּלִים [הוּא יְבָרֶךְ וַיְרַפָּא אֶת־הַחוּלִים]:

Mi she-bei-rakh a-vo-tei-nu av-ra-ham yitz-khak v'ya-a-kov, v'i-mo-tei-nu sa-ra
riv-ka ra-kheil v'lei-a <hu y'va-reikh vi-ra-peï et-ha-kho-lim>.

Holy One of blessing, Who blessed the ones before us—Avraham, Yitzkhak, and Ya'akov; Sarah, Rivka, Rakheil, and Leah. May God bless and may God heal, those who are in need; and open our hearts to reach out with our hands, to bring strength, comfort, and peace.*

D'rash

May God Who blessed our ancestors—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah—may God bless and heal the sick—May our compassionate God help us—we who are enjoying the blessing of good health—to offer with an open heart, the hope, consolation, and support needed by those who are recovering and by their loved ones.

Iyun Tefilla

VISITATION

In their names,
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah,
Shall I bring you
A blessing?
Remember you
For healing?
Let me be sure
To remember
As God remembered,
Coming to the door of
Of Abraham's tent
In the heat of the day,
To heal and to bless.
Let me remember
That kindness
With my own.

* Interpretive translation.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּבַטֵּל מִלְחָמוֹת וּשְׂפִיכוֹת דָּמִים מִן
הָעוֹלָם [מִן הָעוֹלָם] וְתַמְשִׁיךְ שָׁלוֹם גָּדוֹל וְנִפְלָא בְּעוֹלָם וְלֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל גּוֹי חָרָב

וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה. [יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, יְהִי רָצוֹן
מִלְפָּנֶיךָ, יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ]

Y'hi ra-tzon mil-fa-ne-kha a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu vei-lo-hei a-vo-tei-nu shet-va-teil
mil-kha-mot ush-fi-khut da-mim <min ha-o-lam> v'tam-shikh sha-lom ga-dol
v'nif-la ba-o-lam v'lo yi-sa goy el goy khe-rev v'lo yil-ma-du od mil-kha-ma.
[<<Y'hi ra-tzon mil-fa-ne-kha>> a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu vei-lo-hei a-vo-tei-nu.]

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that wars and spilling of blood will cease from the world, and spread a great and wonderful peace over the world, and nation will not lift up sword against nation, and they will not teach war anymore.

D'rash

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that wars and spilling of blood will cease from the world—*May we inculcate in ourselves God's intolerance for the evil that foment war and lawless violence, that each of us becomes a vocal advocate of shalom. And spread a great and wonderful peace over the world, and nation will not lift up sword against nation—***Open our eyes to the violence we do to ourselves, to the blood we shed in our families, to the slaughter in our communities, and to the wars of aggression between nations. And they will not teach war anymore—***Let us acknowledge that our teaching must begin with the recognition that without righteousness there is no truth, without truth there is no justice, without justice there is no freedom, without freedom there is no peace—and without peace there is no kindness.*

Iyun Tefilla

ON THE HOMEFRONT

If the war machine
Can be made
Into pruning hooks,
Who knows what
My own wrath
Might convert to!
Let me remember:
The toll of anger
Is charged not only
To accounts of nations.
Unteach me
Ways of war
In homely places.
May Your will be great
Before my angry mouth.
And even if
I do not want them,
Give me wings of peace
To ride the winds
Of war,
And I will fly

Fast and far
To make my world,
Starting here,
A place of peace.
If I can manage that,
There might just
Be something else
Besides pruning hooks
That we could make.



אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתָהּ, עוֹד יִהְיֶה לָלוֹה סֵלָה:
אֲשֶׁרִי הָעָם שֶׁכָּבָה לוֹ, אֲשֶׁרִי הָעָם שֶׁיֵּי אֱלֹהֵיו:
תִּהְיֶה לְדוֹד,
אֲרוֹמְמָה אֱלוֹהֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְאֶבְרָכָה שְׁמָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
בְּכָל יוֹם אֶבְרָכָהּ, וְאֶהְלֶלָה שְׁמָהּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
גָּדוֹל יֵי וּמִהֲלָל מְאֹד, וְלִגְדֻלָּתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר:
דוֹר לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיהָ, וְגִבּוֹרֶתֶיהָ יִגְדּוּ:
הַדֵּר כְּבוֹד הוֹדָהּ, וְדַבְּרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיהָ אֲשִׁיחָה:
וְעֻזּוֹ נִרְאוֹתֶיהָ יֹאמְרוּ וְגִדּוּלָתָהּ אֲסַפְּרָנָה:
זָכַר רַב טוֹבָהּ יִבְיָעוּ, וְצִדְקָתָהּ יִרְנְנוּ:
חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יֵי, אֶרֶךְ אַפִּים וְגָדֹל חֶסֶד:
טוֹב יֵי לְכָל, וְרַחֲמָיו עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו:
יִדְוֶה יֵי כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהָ, וְחִסְדֶּיהָ יִבְרַכּוּכָה:
כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתָהּ יֹאמְרוּ, וְגִבּוֹרֶתָהּ יִדְבְּרוּ:
לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם גִּבּוֹרֶתִיו, וְכְבוֹד הַדֵּר מַלְכוּתוֹ:
מַלְכוּתָהּ מַלְכוּת כָּל עֲלָמִים, וּמִמְשַׁלְתָּהּ בְּכָל דוֹר וָדוֹר:
סוֹמֵךְ יֵי לְכָל הַנִּפְלָאִים, וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל הַכַּפּוּפִים:
עֵינֵי כָל אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁבְּרוּ, וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ:
פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת יָדָהּ, וּמַשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן:
צַדִּיק יֵי בְּכָל דִּרְכָּיו, וְחֹסֵיד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו:
קְרוֹב יֵי לְכָל קָרְאִיו, לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ בְּאַמֶּת:
רְצוֹן יִרְאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה, וְאֶת שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיִוְשִׁיעֵם:
שׁוֹמֵר יֵי אֶת כָּל אֲהַבָּיו, וְאֶת כָּל הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד:
תִּהְיֶה לָּהֶם יָד בָּרַךְ פִּי, וְיִבְרַךְ כָּל בָּשָׂר שֶׁם קִדְּשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
וְאֶנְחֲנוּ נִבְרָךְ יְיָ, מִעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם, הִלְלוּיָהּ: *

Ash-rei yosh-vei vei-te-kha, od y'ha-l'lu-kha se-la.
Ash-rei ha-am she-ka-kha lo, ash-rei ha-am she-a-do-nai e-lo-hav.

T'hi-la l'da-vid
 A-ro-mim-kha e-lo-hai ha-me-lekh, v'a-var-kha shim-kha l'o-lam v'ed.
 B'khol yom a-var-khe-kha, va'a-ha-l'la shim-kha l'o-lam v'ed.
 Ga-dol a-do-nai u-m'hu-lal m'od, v'lig-du-la-to ein khe-ker.
 Dor l'dor y'sha-bakh ma-a-se-kha, ug-vu-ro-te-kha ya-gi-do.
 Ha-dar k'vod ho-de-kha, v'div-rei nif-l'o-te-kha a-si-kha.
 Ve-e-zuz no-r'o-te-kha yo-mei-ru, ug-du-la-t'kha a-sap-re-na.
 Zei-kher rav tu-v'kha ya-bi-u, v'tzid-ka-t'kha y'ra-nei-nu.
 Kha-nun v'ra-khum a-do-nai, e-rekh a-pa-yim ug-dol-kha-sed.
 Tov a-do-nai la-kol, v'rakh-a-mav al kol-ma-a-sav.
 Yo-du-kha a-do-nai kol-ma-a-se-kha, v'kha-si-de-kha y'var-khu-kha.
 K-vod mal-khu-t'kha yo-mei-ru, ug-vu-ra-t'kha y'da-bei-ru.
 L'ho-di-a liv-nei ha-a-dam g'vu-ro-tav, u-kh'vod ha-dar mal-khu-to.
 Mal-khu-t'kha mal-khut kol-o-la-mim, u-mem-shal-t'kha b'khol-dor va-dor.
 So-meikh a-do-nai l'khol-ha-nof-lim, v'zo-keif l'khol-ha-k'fu-fim.
 Ei-nei khol ei-le-kha y-sa-bei-ru, v'a-ta no-tein la-hem et-okh-lam b'i-to.
 Po-tei-akh et-ya-de-kha, u-mas-bi-a l'khol-khai ra-tzon.
 Tza-dik a-do-nai b'khol-d'ra-khav, v'kha-sid b'khol-ma-a-sav.
 Ka-rov a-do-nai l'khol-ko-r'av, l'khol a-sheer yik-ra-u-hu ve-e-met.
 R'tzon y'rei-av ya-a-seh, v'et-shav-a-tam yish-ma v'yo-shi-eim.
 Sho-meir a-do-nai et-kol-o-ha-vav, v'eit kol-ha-r'sha-im yash-mid.
 T'hi-lat a-do-nai y'da-ber pi, vi-va-reikh kol-ba-sar sheim kod-sho l'o-lam va-ed.
 Va-a-nakh-nu n'va-reikh ya, mei-a-ta v'ad o-lam. Ha-l'lu-ya.

Happy are those who dwell in Your house; they are always praising You, Selah!
 Happy is the people for whom this is so, happy is the people whose God is Adonai.
 A psalm of praise by David,
 I will exalt You, my God the Ruler, and I will bless Your Name forever and ever.
 Every day I will bless You, and I will extol Your Name forever and ever.
 Adonai is great and exceedingly praised, and God's greatness is beyond investigation.
 Each generation will praise Your deeds to the next and of Your mighty deeds they will tell.
 The majestic glory of Your grandeur and Your wondrous deeds I shall meditate on.
 And of Your awesome power they will speak, and Your greatness I shall relate.
 A memory of Your abundant goodness they will utter and of Your righteousness they will sing exultantly.
 Gracious and merciful is Adonai, slow to anger and abundant in kindness.
 Adonai is good to all; God's mercies are on all God's works.
 All Your works shall thank You, Adonai, and Your devout ones will bless You.
 Of the glory of Your kingdom they will speak, and of Your power they will tell;
 To make known to human beings God's mighty deeds, and the majestic splendor of God's kingdom.
 Your kingdom is a kingdom of all eternities, and Your dominion is throughout every generation.
 Adonai supports all the fallen ones and straightens all the bent.
 The eyes of all look to You with hope and You give them their food in its time;
 You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.
 Righteous is Adonai in all God's ways and magnanimous in all God's deeds.
 Adonai is close to all who call upon God, to all who call upon God in truth.
 The will of those who fear God, God will do; and their cry God will hear, and save them.
 Adonai protects all who love God; but all the wicked God will destroy.
 May my mouth declare the praise of Adonai and may all flesh bless God's Holy Name forever and ever.
 And we will bless God from this time and forever, Halleluyah!

D'rash

Happy are those who dwell in Your house; they will always praise You, Selah!—*Those who have made You a presence where they dwell are touched least by the forces that destroy individuals, families, and communities; may they never forget Hamakom (lit., “the place” where God is present). A Psalm of praise by David—An ancient voice, yet alive, turning my insides out, greeting the unknown in me, whether I am sovereign or subject. I will exalt You, my God the Ruler, and I will bless Your Name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will extol Your Name forever and ever. Adonai is great and exceedingly praised, and God’s greatness is beyond investigation. Each generation will praise Your deeds to the next, and of Your mighty deeds they will tell—To those who will listen or learn, may I shout Your Name from the heights, protesting all that is malignant and cruel, knowing that therein is the legacy for our children and all the children that come after them. The majestic glory of Your grandeur and Your wondrous deeds I shall meditate on. And of Your awesome power they will speak, and Your greatness I shall relate. A memory of Your abundant goodness they will utter and of Your righteousness they will sing exultantly—Your Shabbat, between what we have done to live in Your image and what we have yet to do, is our haven, the sacred time when we come together in consolation and celebration of the week past and joyful renewal of our vision and vitality for the struggles of the week ahead. Gracious and merciful is Adonai, slow to anger and abundant in kindness. Adonai is good to all; God’s mercies are on all God’s works—How little we have suffered for all our self-serving manipulations; how undeserving we have been for our survival and success—with chutzpah (effrontery) we’ve called them serendipitous. When living in God’s image, our needs have been fulfilled; we have been shepherded and prepared for the challenges we’ve faced. All Your works shall thank You, Adonai, and Your devout ones will bless You. Of the glory of Your kingdom they will speak, and of Your power they will tell. To make known to human beings God’s mighty deeds, and the majestic splendor of God’s kingdom—Your rivers are running, Your justice demanding, Your creation renewed—another glorious day. You have filled us with wonder, lifting us high up above. The words spill out despite our reluctance: You have thrilled us beyond knowing, taking us out of ourselves. Your kingdom is a kingdom of all eternities, and Your dominion is throughout every generation—The sages of science have made it their mission to discover what we call the immutable laws of nature, succeeding beyond our wildest imagining. Adonai supports the fallen ones and straightens all the bent. The eyes of all look to You with hope and You give them food in its time—You have given us blessings beyond counting; You have given us life and hope, earth and its provender, and the loved ones you have made and brought to us in Your goodness. You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Righteous is Adonai in all God’s ways and magnanimous in all God’s deeds—You are our source and our sustenance, Who without fail provides for all our needs when we reach within ourselves, our families, our communities, and our people to use all that You have given us. Adonai is close to all who call upon God, to all who call upon God in truth—We embrace Your divine power, accepting openly and joyfully that in You and Your Torah we are strengthened and guided to meet the challenges we face. The will of those who are in awe of God, God will do—When we are angry because we don’t want to be held accountable for others and for the consequences of our own actions, we may choose atonement or greater spiritual alienation from the divine image that the Creator implanted within us. When we choose to be at one with God, in the service of the Holy One, God does our will. Adonai protects all who love God—But God rebuked Moses at the edge of the Reed Sea for remaining immobilized in prayer, waiting passively for God’s salvation, while the Children of Israel were threatened by the pursuing Egyptians. We too must act to save ourselves. But all the wicked God will destroy—If we miss the right path, thus wronging or losing ourself and, possibly, others, because we fail to speak or act when we might prevent harm to one who is innocent, we tilt ourselves toward evil, which if not halted is the beginning of our destruction. In effect, we do evil by failing to act against it when it is within our power. We thus bear the burden of self-imposed alienation from the Creator of the world and all that is good in it. May my mouth declare the praise of Adonai and may all flesh bless God’s Holy Name forever and ever. And we will bless God from this time and forever, Halleluyah!—May*

each of us, with the Torah as our guide, become a blessing in the lives of those around us, always acquiescing to the urge to tell of the gifts we have received in return, praise God!

Iyun Tefilla

BE THE FIRST IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!!!

To build a
Perpetual motion machine!
Project Plans
Available now!
Step 1:
Make yourself
Happy!
Grasp
Ashrei
(Read: Striding continuously forward)
Firmly
To set in motion
On path
As designated
In Torah manual,
Engaging both
Hands and feet.
Warning:
Do not attempt
This much happiness
Without Help.
(Consult Manual).
Step 2:
Take
Od y'hal'lukha—
I will praise You forever—
In your pocket
(Recommended fuel source)
Congratulations!
You are the first
In your neighborhood
To become
A living,
Breathing,
Never-ending
House of prayer
Bringing God's
Grace and peace
Wherever you go!
Warning:
DO NOT TURN OFF!

* From Psalms 84:5, 144:15, and 145.

עץ חיים היא,
 למחזיקים בה,
 ותמכיה מאשר.
 דרכיה דרכי נעם,
 וכל נתיבותיה שלום.*

Eitz kha-yim hi
 la-ma-kha-zi-kim ba,
 v'to-m'khe-kha m'u-shar.
 D'ra-khe-ha dar-khei no-am,
 v'khol n'ti-vo-te-ha sha-lom.

You flower on
 ancient tree,
 shading paths beyond those we know.
 And your strength renews all life,
 binding heaven to earth and sea.*

עץ חיים היא. . .

A tree of life it is to those who take hold of it, and those who support it are happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.

D'rash

A tree of life it is to those who take hold of it—If we will make the Torah our own, it will become the tree of our life—giving us deep roots in our history and heritage, a solid trunk of wisdom on which to stand, a surfeit of branches of learning to guide us through life's challenges, and an explosion of simkha blossoms (joyful celebrations) that will beautify our days with meaning and purpose. **And those who support it are happy**—As with all of life, there is greater joy in giving than receiving; thus our greatest happiness will derive from our efforts to bring the blessings of Torah into the lives of others. **Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.** If we will but join together with others, proclaiming the vision of Torah, each of us walking the path in our own unique way within its bounds, we shall achieve the deepest happiness possible.

Iyun Tefilla

THE WAY BACK

When Eve,
 The mother of all,
 Noticed the tree of life
 Before she took matters
 Into her own hands,
 Did she think, like us:
 I want to live forever?
 Did she then regret



Having to leave paradise,
 The only home
 She'd ever known,
 And find it harsh
 That God placed
 A flaming sword
 That turns every which way
 And a pair of angels
 To guard the tree?
 But could they not
 Just as easily
 Have been waiting
 There for us
 All this time,
 Guarding the way
 Back?
 Some say,
 If only we had
 A trail of breadcrumbs
 To show us the way.
 I say we do.
 I say when God blew
 The breath of life into us
 The letters of the Torah
 Were included.

* Interpretive translation of Proverbs 3:18, 17.

כְּבוֹדוֹ מִלֵּא [מִלֵּא] עוֹלָם, מִשְׁרָתֵי שׁוֹאֲלִים זֶה לָזֶה, [מִשְׁרָתֵי שׁוֹאֲלִים זֶה לָזֶה]
 אֵיה מְקוֹם [מְקוֹם] כְּבוֹדוֹ מִלֵּא, מִלֵּא עוֹלָם, מִשְׁרָתֵי שׁוֹאֲלִים זֶה לָזֶה,
 מִשְׁרָתֵי שׁוֹאֲלִים זֶה לָזֶה אֵיה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ.

<K'vo-do <ma-lei> o-lam, <m'sha-r'tav sho-a-lim zeh la-zeh>, a-yei <m'kom>
 k'vo-do.>

God's glory fills the world, God's ministering angels ask one another, Where is the place of God's glory?

D'rash

God's glory fills the world—*God's love and compassion for life and its potential know no boundaries; from mountain tops to desert valleys, from the skies to the ocean depths, we discover the pulsating presence of God's glory. God's ministering angels ask one another, Where is the place of God's glory?—All those who carry the word of God must wonder as to its source; but eventually they must leave off their inquiries, accepting the limits of their understanding, to carry out their task as messengers.*

Iyun Tefilla

OURS TO KNOW

Like the angels
We must content
Ourselves
With not knowing
God's place.
And like the stars,
Those ancient
Ships of light
Steering into darkness
On their way to
Who knows where,
We sail on,
Never knowing
The birthing place of light,
Except the path
That's put before us
In this world.
And yet it's ours
To know
The glory of it
Fills the earth!
Of course,
It's easy
Not to see
What's hidden
In plain sight.
It conforms to the rule:
Whatever
We take for granted
Becomes invisible.

אֵין כְּאַלְהֵינוּ, אֵין כְּאַדוֹנֵינוּ, אֵין כְּמַלְכֵנוּ, אֵין כְּמוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.
מִי כְּאַלְהֵינוּ, מִי כְּאַדוֹנֵינוּ, מִי כְּמַלְכֵנוּ, מִי כְּמוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.
נוֹדֶה לְאַלְהֵינוּ, נוֹדֶה לְאַדוֹנֵינוּ, נוֹדֶה לְמַלְכֵנוּ, נוֹדֶה לְמוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּרוּךְ אֲדוֹנֵינוּ, בְּרוּךְ מַלְכֵנוּ, בְּרוּךְ מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.
אַתָּה הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אַתָּה הוּא אֲדוֹנֵינוּ, אַתָּה הוּא מַלְכֵנוּ, אַתָּה הוּא מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.
אַתָּה הוּא שֶׁהַקְטִירוֹ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת קְטֶרֶת הַסָּמִים.

Ein kei-lo-hei-nu, ein ka-do-nei-nu, ein k'mal-kei-nu, ein k'mo-shi-ei-nu.

Mi khei-lo-hei-nu, mi kha-do-nei-nu, mi kh'mal-kei-nu, mi kh'mo-shi-ei-nu.

No-deh lei-lo-hei-nu, no-deh la-do-nei-nu, no-deh l'mal-kei-nu, no-deh l'mo-shi-ei-nu.

Ba-rukh e-lo-hei-nu, ba-rukh a-do-nei-nu, ba-rukh mal-kei-nu, ba-rukh mo-shi-ei-nu.

A-ta hu e-lo-hei-nu, a-ta hu a-do-nei-nu, a-ta hu mal-kei-nu, a-ta hu mo-shi-ei-nu.
A-ta hu she-hik-ti-ru a-vo-tei-nu l'fa-ne-kha et k'to-ret ha-sa-mim.

There is none like our God, there is none like our Lord, there is none like our Ruler, there is none like our Savior.

Who is like our God, who is like our Lord, who is like our Ruler, who is like our Savior?

Let us thank our God, let us thank our Lord, let us thank our Ruler, let us thank our Savior.

Blessed is our God, blessed is our Lord, blessed is our ruler, blessed is our Savior.

It is You Who are our God, it is You Who are our Lord, it is You Who are our Ruler, it is You Who are our Savior.

You are the One before whom our ancestors burned the incense of spices.

D'rash

There is none like our God, there is none like our Lord, there is none like our Ruler, there is none like our Savior—*Our devotion to the Holy One is not out of habit or sentimentality, but because the Holy Name stands for all we hold dear, the justice and compassion we cannot forsake. Who is like our God, who is like our Lord, who is like our Ruler, who is like our Savior?—We have found nothing-gods that divert us, but none to which we are devoted dor l'dor (generation to generation): none are the Author of history and humanity. Let us thank our God, let us thank our Lord, let us thank our Ruler, let us thank our Savior—***At the margin of love and loneliness, work or uselessness, life or death, there is but One God Who receives our spontaneous gratitude. Blessed is our God, blessed is our Lord, blessed is our Ruler, blessed is our Savior—***There is no other god in whose image we seek to live our lives. It is You Who are our God, it is You Who are our Lord, it is You Who are our Ruler, it is You Who are our Savior—We admit it, we acknowledge it, we proclaim it: You are the One in Whom we find salvation. You are the One before Whom our ancestors burned the incense of the spices—***Withal, throughout the generations, we have returned to Your altar to share the sweet savor of our love for You.**

Iyun Tefilla

PAPER GOD

Isn't it embarrassing
Though,
To get caught
Bowing to stone?
Everyone knows
It's not cool.
Who wants to say:
This thing of stone
Has power over me?
And, after all, a thing
Of so little substance.
Me, an individual!
I have power.
But oh paper,
Little green paper!
Nothing embarrassing
About that.

It's mostly not
 The thing itself,
 Of course,
 The consciousness
 Of thousand dollar bills
 Floating on the brain
 Like ticker tape.
 It's mostly not
 The bowing down.
 No, the main problem with
 Worshipping idols is
 That they require
 So little.
 You think not?
 Remember the time
 We worshipped
 The calf?
 Remember the orgy?
 Remember the incest?
 Remember that was when
 We murdered Hur.



אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ, בְּטֶרֶם כָּל יִצִּיר נִבְרָא.
 לַעֲת נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחֶפְצוֹ כָּל, אֲזַי מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא.
 וְאַחֲרֵי כְּכֹלֹת הַכָּל, לְבִדּוֹ יִמְלֹךְ נוֹרָא.
 וְהוּא הָיָה, וְהוּא הָיָה, וְהוּא יְהִיָּה, בְּתַפְאָרָה.
 וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאֵין שְׁנֵי, לְהַמְשִׁיל לוֹ לְהַחֲבִירָה.
 בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית בְּלִי תְּכֵלִית, וְלֹא הָעֵז וְהַמְשָׁרָה.
 וְהוּא אֵלִי וְחִי גֵּאֲלִי, וְצוּר חֲבֵלִי בַּעַת צָרָה.
 וְהוּא נָסִי וּמִנּוּס לִי מִנֶּת כּוֹסִי בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא.
 בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי, בַּעַת אִישָׁן וְאַעִּירָה.
 וְעַם רוּחִי גִוִּיתִי, יֵי לִי וְלֹא אִירָא.

A-don o-lam a-sheh ma-lakh, b'te-rem kol y'tzir niv-ra
 L'eit na-a'sa v'khef-tzo kol, a-zai me-lekh sh'mo nik-ra.
 V'a-kha-rei kikh-lot ha-kol, l'va-do yim-lokh no-ra.
 V'hu ha-ya, v'hu ho-veh, v'hu yi-hi-yeh b'tif-a-ra.
 V'hu e-khad v'ein shei-ni, l'ham-shil lo l'hakh-bi-ra.

B'li rei-shit, b'li takh-lit, v'lo ha-oz v'ha-mis-ra.
 V'hu ei-li v'khai go-a-li, v'tzur khevli b'eit tza-ra.
 V'hu ni-si u-ma-nos li, m'nat ko-si b'yom ek-ra.
 B'ya-do af-kid ru-khi, b'eit i-shan v'a-i-ra
 V'im ru-khi g'vi-ya-ti, a-do-nai li v'lo i-ra.

Ruler of the universe, Who ruled before any form was created. When God's will brought all into being, then as "Ruler" was God's Name proclaimed.

After all has ceased to be, God, the Awesome One, will reign alone. It is God Who was, God Who is, and God Who shall abide in splendor.

God is One—there is no second to compare to God, to be God's equal. Without beginning, without ending—God is the power and dominion.

Adonai is my God, my living Redeemer, Rock of my pain in time of trouble. God is my banner, a refuge for me, the portion of my cup on the day I call.

Into God's hand I shall entrust my spirit at the time I go to sleep and when I wake. With my spirit shall my body remain. Adonai is with me, I shall not fear.

D'rash

Ruler of the universe, Who ruled before any form was created—*With b'reishit (in this beginning), we see both the "big bang" and the "steady state" of Your creativity, affirming You as the ultimate Author of creation and destruction. When God's will brought all into being, then as "Ruler" was God's Name proclaimed—***We could not acknowledge a king as more than leader, because he too was ruled; we could not acknowledge the sun or moon or stars as sovereign, for they too were subservient; we could not acknowledge the idols of other nations as governors, since they made no binding rules. But Your blueprint for creation, Your Torah, compelled us to proclaim Your reign. After all has ceased to be, God, the Awesome One, will reign alone. It is God Who was, God Who is, and God Who shall abide in splendor—***During the big bangs of Your creations, You are the only steady state: in each tzimtzum (apparent contraction and expansion of God's infinite light or presence), the creation is created out of nothing. God is One—there is no second to compare to God, to be God's equal. Without beginning, without ending—God is the power and dominion—Every other object of worship has passed into oblivion in the face of Your immanent compassion and mercy and transcendent power and majesty. Adonai is my God, my living Redeemer, Rock of my pain in time of trouble. God is my banner, a refuge for me, the portion of my cup on the day I call—I have no illusion that there is any other Source of my strength; I have no fantasy that there is any greater measure of goodness; I have no hallucination that my salvation shall be found anywhere else. Into God's hand I shall entrust my spirit at the time I go to sleep and when I wake. With my spirit shall my body remain. Adonai is with me, I shall not fear—***You are faithful to me: every day, without fail, You restore my soul to me. After hours of unconsciousness and suspension of my will to live in Your image, You breathe Your spirit into me again. My soul is again consciously connected to You: it wants to live in Your image, to do Your will in the world, to sanctify Your name no matter the obstacle.**

Iyun Tefilla

FEEL NO FEAR

Is what they tell you.
 What they really mean
 Is pretend
 Not to feel.

I say,
Guard your fear.
Beware
Wasting it
On other people
And their money.
Fear only that
Your life
Will have no meaning.
Give in to this fear daily.
And if, like me,
You are afraid
Of everything,
Say now:
God is mine—
I feel this fear
But I refuse
To act on it.

הִנֵּה אֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי, אֲבֹטָח וְלֹא אֶפְחָד,
[Adonai is the source of our strength and rejoicing.]
כִּי עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יִי, וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה:
וּשְׂאֲבָתָם מִים בְּשָׁשׂוֹן מִמַּעֲיָנִי הִישׁוּעָה:
לִי הִישׁוּעָה עַל עֲמָךְ בִּרְכָתְךָ סֵלָה:
יְיָ צְבָאוֹת עֲמָנוּ מִשְׁגָּב לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה:
יְיָ צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר־י אָדָם בִּטָּח בְּךָ:
יְיָ הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְיוֹם קִרְאָנוּ:
לַיהוּדִים הֵיטָה אוֹרָה וְשִׁמְחָה וְשָׁשׂוֹן וִיקָר:
כֵּן תִּהְיֶה לָנוּ, כּוֹס יְשׁוּעוֹת אֲשָׁא. וּבִשְׁם יְיָ אֶקְרָא: *
[Adonai is the source of our strength and rejoicing.]

Hi-nei eil y'shu-a-ti ev-takh v'lo ef-khad.
Ki o-zi v'zim-rat ya va-y'hi li li-shu-a.
U-shav-tem ma-yim b'sa-son mi-ma-a'y'nei ha-y'shu-a.
La-do-nai ha-y'shu-a al am-kha bir-kha-te-kha, se-la.
A-do-nai tz'va-ot i-ma-nu mis-gav la-nu e-lo-hei ya-a'kov, se-la.
A-do-nai tz'va-ot ash-rei a-dam bo-tei-akh bakh.
A-do-nai ho-shi-a ha-me-lekh ya-a'nei-nu v'yom kor-ei-nu.
La-y'hu-dim ha-y'ta o-ra v'sim-kha v'sa-son vi-kar.
Kein ti-h'yeh la-nu, kos y'shu-ot e-sa. U-v'sheim a-do-nai ek-ra.

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and I will not fear, for my strength and my praise is God, Adonai,
Who was my deliverance.
You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation.
To Adonai is deliverance, Your blessing is upon Your people, Selah.

Adonai of Legions is with us, a tower for us is the God of Jacob, Selah.
 Adonai of Legions, happy is the person who trusts in You.
 Adonai save [us]—may the Sovereign answer us on the day that we call.
 For the Jews there was light and joy and bliss and honor, so may it be for us.
 The cup of deliverance I will raise, and the name of Adonai I will invoke.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Ba-rukh a-ta a-do-nai, e-lo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam, bo-rei p'ri ha-ga-fen.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בִשְׂמִים:

Ba-rukh a-ta a-do-nai, e-lo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam, bo-rei mi-nei v'sa-mim.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of varied spices.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ:

Ba-rukh a-ta a-do-nai, e-lo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam, bo-rei m'o-rei ha-aish.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of the light of fire.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמְּבָדִיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין
 יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים, בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, לְשֶׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַמְּבָדִיל בֵּין
 קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל:

Ba-rukh a-ta a-do-nai, e-lo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam, ha-mav-dil bein ko-desh
 l'khol, bein or l'kho-shekh, bein yis-ra-eil la'a-mim, bein yom hash-vi-i, l'shei-
 shet y'mei ha-ma-a-seh: ba-rukh a-ta a-do-nai, ha-mav-dil bein ko-desh l'khol.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who separates sacred from profane, light from darkness, the seventh day of rest from the six days of labor. Blessed are You, Adonai, who separates the sacred from the profane.

D'rash

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and I will not fear, for my strength and my praise is God, Adonai, Who was my deliverance—Look at my life—do you not see how I have been saved? No longer am I a slave to mistrust and anxiety. Yet I claim no virtue for any strength or accomplishment—I was delivered by the God whose presence calls attention to whatever value my life has achieved. You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation—You too, with all your doubts and disabilities, may choose to refresh yourself from the Creator's infinite strength and compassion. To Adonai is deliverance, Your blessing is upon Your people, Selah. Adonai of Legions is with us, a tower for us is the God of Jacob, Selah. Adonai of Legions, happy is the person who trusts in You. Adonai

save [us]—may the Sovereign answer us on the day that we call—See all around us the blessed, the legions seeking to serve the Creator, those who have been delivered to a higher calling, who are secure and fulfilled because the Holy One has guided them and sustained them. **For the Jews there was light and joy and bliss and honor, so may it be for us—With Adonai, our people's faith and hope was not empty, nor need it be for us in this time, despite our reason and experience. The cup of deliverance I will raise, and the name of Adonai I will invoke—Because there is no greater source of joy in my life than to praise the God Who has created the Torah and the Jewish people to walk in its path.**

Iyun Tefilla

CATCHING FIRE

Here's how
To make a fire
After Shabbat.
When the last moment
Flies away
From you
In the smoke
Of the candle,
And the Aishdat,**
The holy fire,
Seems lost to you,
Stir the ashes,
Find some coals.
To carry back
To your week.
Look around
For kindling
(A mitzvah).
In fact,
To make it last,
Build a tent
Of sticks.
Blow gently!
Keep blowing!
Don't let it go out!

* From Isaiah 12:2-3, Psalms 3:9 and 46:12, Esther 8:16, and Psalm 116:13.

** אֵשֶׁת (Deuteronomy 33:2)—fire become law, the Torah.

Our Shabbos now has ended
With its day of peace and prayer,
We have read the Torah portion
And seen the future there
We have found our second souls
And kindred spirits in our midst,
So renewed in faith and vision
We face the week ahead

Sh'vua tov,
Sweet savor of Shabbat
We hold so close,
Shabbat Shalom

D'rash

Our Shabbos now has ended—*The 25 hours of reflection, recreation, and regeneration have ceased, but once again we embark on the extended Shabbat, the days which follow and lead up to those 25 hours, in which we seek to make the Shekhina ever more present in the world. With its day of peace and prayer*—We have not ceased doing, but instead have taken the break from mundane pressures and demands as an opportunity to be our whole selves, to realize—literally hold in our mind's eye—our full potential in family, community, and sacred purposes. **We have read the Torah portion and seen the future there**—We have abandoned the desperate fear of losing control, which is the source of our obsession with self-determination, in recognition that our personal preferences lead neither to our own fulfillment nor to that of our children or their children. **We have found our second souls and kindred spirits in our midst**—Looking not within ourselves for God's voice, since we are not like animals who do what is good for themselves as a matter of instinct, we turn our eyes and hearts heavenward, certain that the source of fulfillment is communal dedication to the vision and path of Torah. **So renewed in faith and vision, we face the week ahead**—The rediscovery of our additional soul has, once again, empowered us to move forward as individuals and members of a kahal poalei tzedek, despite our reason and experience, which would otherwise demoralize and immobilize us. **Sh'vua tov, sweet savor of Shabbat we hold so close, Shabbat Shalom**—We are confident that to the degree we make Shabbat, it shall nourish and sustain our spirits in the week ahead, energizing us day-to-day l'sheim yikhud, for the sake of the unification of the Holy One.



Iyun Tefilla

SECOND SOUL

Captive
Self,
Lonely-bird-
In-a-cage
Soul,
Was that you
I heard
Singing
In the dark?
Were you
Hoping
All the time
That I
Would come?

While I
Was waiting
All that time
For you?
And then
The Shabbos
Moment came
When I had
Had enough!
Enough of work.
Enough of waiting.
You wouldn't
Come for me—
I'd come
For you!
And so
I rearranged
My weekday self
To harmonize
Your singing soul,
And looked
Into the Torah.
There you were!
Standing
In the future
Of my people!